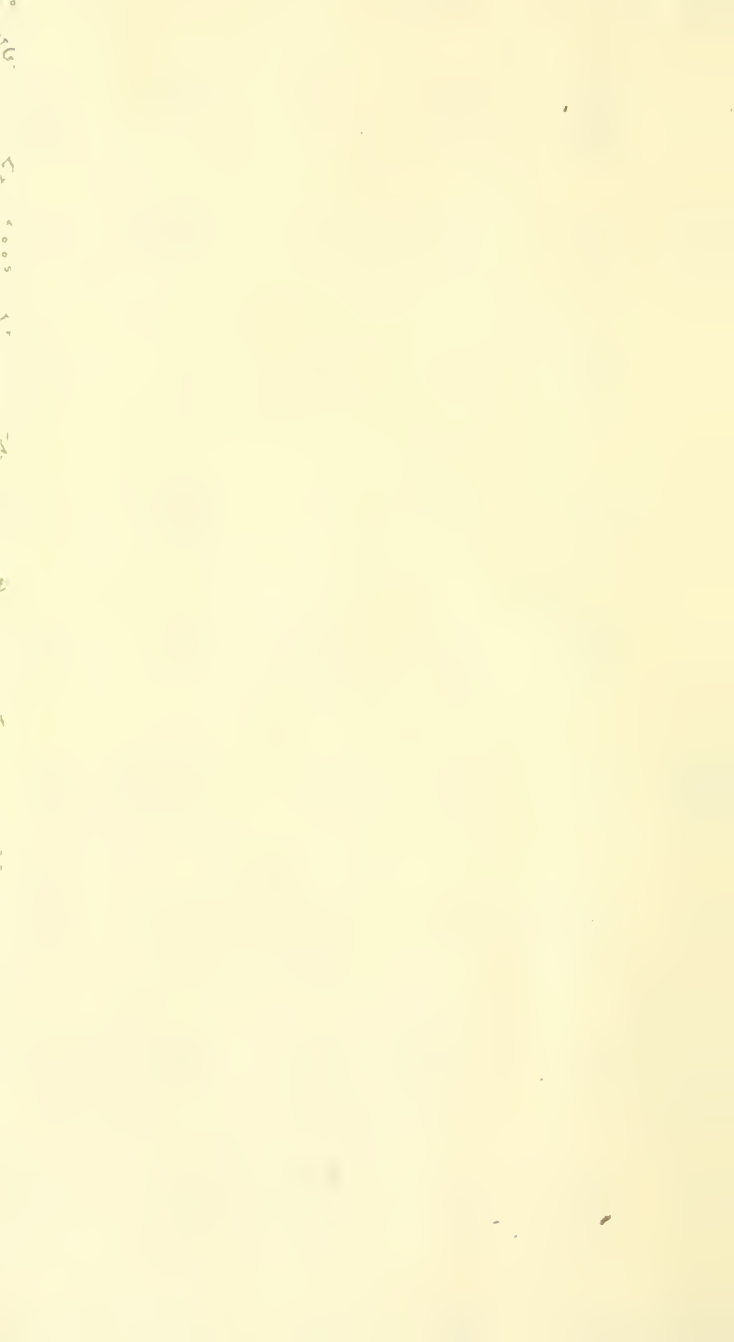


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L. P.

HOME, SWEET HOME.

A Grim Farce,

IN THREE ACTS.

BY

CHAS. W. SEYMOUR.

"Every one for himself."—SHAKESPEARE.

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HOME, SWEET HOME.

Characters.

MR. NICHOLAS FLUSH (*a Millionaire, aged 83*).

LEOPOLD HAARBAUER, M.D., PH.D. (*an Eccentric in Medicine*).

MR. BLACKSTONE FORTEW, LL.D. (*a Counselor at Law possessed of the judicial mind*).

MR. ARISTOTLE J. SHORT (*a nephew of the celebrated Grammarian*).

MR. A. LEWIN GREENE (*a young man of the period, living on hope*).

MIGNONETTE (*one that was loved*).

MISS JANE FLUSH (*sister of the Millionaire, aged 78*).

MRS. ARISTOTLE J. SHORT (*a wife and a mother*).

MISS EDITH LEWELLYN GRACE SHORT (*the eldest—who gets him*).

MISS ELSIE DE FOREST NITA SHORT (*the youngest—who wants him*).

MISS BRIDGET BEGORRA (*a lady in service*).

BIJOU (*one that is loved*)

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• TIME—Present. SCENE—Anywhere.

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ACT I.

Marriage!

SCENE 1. Residence of MR. FLUSH. (*Ten days supposed to elapse between this Scene and Scene 2.*)

SCENE 2. House of MR. SHORT. (*Three weeks supposed to elapse between this Scene and Scene 3.*)

SCENE 3. House of MR. SHORT. (*Seven weeks supposed to elapse between this Act and Act II.*)

ACT II.

Madness!!

SCENE. House of MR. FLUSH. (*Ten months supposed to elapse between this Act and Act III.*)

ACT III.

Death!!!

SCENE the same as Act II.





# “HOME, SWEET HOME.”

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## ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Room in the house of MR. FLUSIL. Furniture plain and substantial—very old-fashioned—walls bare—arrangement formal. When curtain rises DR. HAARBAUER discovered at Table L. C. FORT. on chair L. C. Large chair L. FR.*

FORT. It wouldn't alter my opinion if he'd worn it for ten years.

DR. H. (*angrily*) Vell, und you tink dot of my Elegdrig Pad. I tink dot of your lawyers. To my mind it is a vorse hombogs for vun man mitt vun hett und vun mind at *run* time to tink he can be on two sides of everytings—und be honest.

FORT. Haarbauer, you have never got over that case I compromised for you.

DR. H. Dot's it compromise everytings.

FORT. You were wrong, depend upon it. Now I dont like these continual insinuations. Why am I on both sides of “everytings,” as you ungrammatically call it? Is it my fault? Am I to blame that I am such a respectable Attorney that I am always retained by both sides in every case of importance? I am not ashamed of it! It's a good thing for me, it just doubles my income, and its a good thing for my clients—although that is of minor importance—for it insures them an attorney of equal ability on each side. But to say or to insinuate that I cannot be honestly on both sides at once is false, sir. Lawyers like myself have what is known as judicial minds. They can talk with one party and advise him, and talk with his opponent and advise him without any interest in either—without a grain of partiality for either—if the retainers be equal and paid. All our great jurists, sir, have been possessed of just this quality of mind.

DR. H. All right, ve vont quorell, but die next time I hef a case mit lawyers—I hef vum vat vill shtay on die same side mit me until ve get droo anyhow, my gracious!

FORT. No, we wont quarrel. We have too many interests in common, besides being very old friends. I wonder what Flush wants us for? I've got an engagement: I drew old Watkins's Will last week. He died yesterday, his son retained me to-day to contest it, and the widow sent me word she wanted to see me on the other side, at nine this evening.

DR. H. Vot's die matter now mit *dot* vill, my gracious

FORT. The old gentleman directed his executrix to provide a headstone for his grave, and John thinks it will be a useless expense.

DR. H. How much cost die headcheese?

FORT. Headstone—Oh, fifteen dollars or so.

DR. H. Und how much cost die lawyers to break die vill—five thousand dollars, maybe?

FORT. Yes, I should calculate to get that—out of the two sides.

DR. H. Vell—dot's pisness!

(Enter JANE, c., knitting.)

J. (Coming down and sitting L. c.) Good evening, Doctor,—and Mr. Fortew. Brother will be here in a moment.

FORT. Do you know why he has sent for us?

J. No, only I fancy it's something about his affairs—after his death. I think lately he's realized how old he is—and he's been getting everything ready. Perhaps he wants to talk with you about me—when he is gone—but he need not trouble his dear old head—for I couldn't last long then. Seventy eight years we've lived under the same roof—boy and girl—man and woman—brother and sister.

DR. H. Und such a sister, My gracious!

J. I have tried to be a good sister; he has deserved it. He has been a good brother to me all these years.

DR. H. How could he help et—my gracious!

FORT. Go it, old Chesterfield—what manners you've got!

J. Brother is remarkably smart for a man of his years, and considering all he's been through.

DR. H. Vy take vat I knows myself—two strikes of paralysis, lumbago chronic, and gout for thirty-nine year—und yet shtand

up—hett clear. Vot a Constitushun! Dey make none such now. Vun leetle draft of air—unt die friends invited to die funeral. Your bruder may last mit care—vun—two year yet—who can dell vot vill do my pad! My gracious!

J. He thinks they do him good—with his magnetic trowsers and galvanized undershirt—which, by the way, he sent around this morning to be more strongly charged—did you get it?

DR. H. I suppose dey hef him in die Battery. I hef not been dere to-day.

J. Brother-says when he wears them altogether—they prickle.

DR. H. (*delighted*) I believe him. You hear dot mein frient? Do hombogs prickle? Ha! ha! my gracious!

*Enter FLUSH L., cane in hand, totters in rather feebly and out of breath. J. fixes chair for him, L. FR., helps him carefully into it—puts pillow behind his back and rest under foot—raising it tenderly—all her actions about him full of care and solicitude.*

MR. FL. How d'ye do, Doctor? How d'ye do, Fortew? Thank you for coming. That will do Jane, you go now—I want to have a little talk with my old cronies here all alone—I'll call you if I want anything.

J. (*Whispers to FL.*)

FL. Oh! very comfortable, I'll get along very well.

J. (*Exit c., turning affectionately towards FL. as she goes out.*) Dear old Brother!

MR. FL. Ah! ha! There goes one in a thousand, boys!

DR. H. One in a million—my gracious!

FORT. Well, Mr. Flush, I am in somewhat of a hurry; can we come to business, so I can get away. You sent for us—

MR. FL. Yes, yes, one moment; my back is very lame to-day, Doctor. Ah. (*rubbing it.*)

DR. H. Perhaps die pads hef shlipped—

MR. FL. No—they haven't—they're all right. Well, I'm going to surprise you. I—I am—*going—to—get—married!*

FORT. (*much surprised*) By the Lord—Chancellor!

DR. H. (*astonished*) My gracious!

MR. FL. (*feeling in his pocket*) Pshaw! I've left a paper I wanted—in my room. I will get it. (*rises slowly and totters out*)

DR. H. Vell! How's dot for a constitution? Dot is die pad vot hef shtarted him, my gracious!

FORT. We've nothing to lose by it. He's made no Will, so we'll lose no legacy, and—it may make business—more demand for pads. Ha! ha! And you never can tell what a marriage will do for the law—until both parties and all their descendants are dead, buried, and their place of sepulture forgotten.

DR. H. Ve vill seem pleased, eh?

FORT. Yes, we'll smile and encourage him?

DR. H. Vot old hambogs ve ar—ourselves.

FORT. Nonsense, friends—old friends.

DR. H. Dot's vot I say—hambogs.

(MR. FL. *re-enters*, L., *with a crumpled yellow paper in hand, and resumes his seat.*)

MR. FL. I suppose you will think I am too old a man to have such an idea. Eighty-three years old—three months ago; but after all what are a few years so long as the heart keeps young?

DR. H. Dot's it, mit your elegdric clothes—vell charged—you vill shtill talk as fast as any voman—dot is—most any.

MR. FL. I have been all my life, as you know, devoted to business—bound down hand and foot, heart and soul to it. Sixty-two years at the same work in the same place; no recreation, no leisure, until I gave it up two years ago. Well, I made a fortune, and a large fortune, and I made it myself, and I made it honestly. There is not a dollar of it that I am ashamed to-day to call my own.

DR. H. Dot's saying a goot deal now-a-days.

MR. FL. Such a thing as marriage never entered my head until two weeks ago I was clearing out some of my oldest papers and I came on this (*holding up paper*). What do you think it is?

DR. H. Some fly paper vot you carried your lunch in to school?

MR. FL. No, a love letter. The only one I ever got (*opens paper*). "May 10th, 1812. My darling Nick"—I had forgotten that letter and its writer, and I have not yet been able to recollect the writer's name. It is signed "Your own Mamie." But when I saw it and read as much of it as I could decipher I had the same feeling come over me as when I first saw it. I felt my hear start up and thump and my cheeks burn. The first time they had even been warm in thirty years. A sort of thrill passed all through me, from my gouty toes up to my bald head, and suddenly it all seemed to come back. And while I could not remember her

name I did remember vaguely two brown eyes, red lips, soft pink cheeks and a voice that I have not heard the like of for sweetness or softness since. And I remembered how fond we were of each other. So fond that we even liked to go out in the night air, in the moonshine together. I may be getting to be a particularly foolish old fool, but those thoughts and feelings have stayed with me since that day. They must have been only shimmering all these years. In this old body of mine, shrunk and dry, the heart has grown young again and fairly leaps up against my chest now that I speak of it all.

DR. H. "It is die pad—my gracious! Vot a great idea dot vos of mine!

MR. FL. I don't care what it is. It has changed me. I have a pride in my appearance now. I don't think I am such a bad looking fellow, take it all together, when my chin is clean. I find myself reading the marriage notices every morning. I have read three novels—the first of my life. One, called "Fair Little Lilian and Her Love Story," I finished without once laying it down, except to get the cramps out of my fingers, and to have my back rubbed. I walk out now on the street, among the shops in the afternoons and he! he! Now dont laugh at me, boys—I look at the girls. I feel like a gonty knight—a troubadour grown stiff in the joints, or any other fellow who loves all lovely women. And now it has all settled down into a purpose—to marry a wife—to bring a lovely woman here into my own house—for myself—one on whom I can pour out the tenderness that seems fairly welling up within me. I wanted to tell you this—and I want your advice. Now whom shall I marry?

DR. H. Vell dere's old Vidow Flopp. She moost vay now some 220 pounds.

FORT. There's old Miss Spine. She must be 65 and has had quite a legacy.

MR. FL. I dont want any of your old widows, or old maids, or legacies. I have money enough for two. I want some one who is young and sweet, loving and artless, pretty and innocent. Who will come here to our home and brighten it up like sunshine. Who will cheer us with merry laughter, jest and song. Who will have bright eyes and a winning smile, and childlike manners—like Lilian, in the novel—like my own Mamie, in the love-letter, whose last name I have forgotten.

DR. H. Vot a man to talk—my gracious. You almost make me feel like yourself. You shtir oop my old blood. And if I vas not a great-grandfader und my danghter und her grandchildren did not lif mit me I vould marry sometings so myself—my gracious!

MR. FL. There are plenty of young, artless and pretty women about now-a-days.

DR. H. Idell you von—Miss Greene. I always vatch her—cross die street—She haf beautiful leetle foot, dot girl.

FORT. You old sinner! What has a great-grandfather to do with pretty feet?

DR. H. Vell, a great-grandfader can hef his feelings, maybe—I tink—my gracious!

MR. FL. I have one young lady in mind—that is, one of two in mind, Aristotle Shorts' daughters. They are both pretty, sweet, bright looking girls, only just out of school, and so must be artless, innocent and childlike.

FORT. Ah! They are pretty. I saw them only yesterday, walking down street. One with Widow Greenes' boy and the other carrying a little dog. They had cunning caps on, just alike, jauntily set on one side of their heads, little sacques trimmed just alike, and I could see their dapper little feet twinkling under their skirts like black stars in a sky of red flannel—I could have kissed them.

DR. H. (*banteringly*) My gracious—vot should a old fellow mit a judicial mind hef to do mit young ladies feet twinkling, eh? ha! ha!

FORT. Oh! keep still!

MR. FL. To tell you the truth, I have made up my mind to propose for one of them. In fact, to be frank with you, I have already opened up a correspondence with Mr. Short, on the subject, with every prospect of success.

FORT. Then what did you want us for? After you have settled it all you ask our advice. You are like all my clients. They come to me for counsel and then do as they please.

DR. H. Dot's vere dey is vise.

MR. FL. The fact is, my principal reason for sending for you was to ask you to do me a favor. (*Doctor and Fort. look blankly at one another.*) I want you to help me. You are my oldest



and dearest friends, and I don't think I have ever asked you before to do anything for me out of friendship. I want you both—or one of you—to break this matter considerably and—not too abruptly—to my—sister.

DR. H. Oh! my gracious!

FORT. You don't mean to say you have not told her your plans?

MR. FL. Not one word of them. I have not had the courage.

FORT. Well, Doctor, you do it. You have such manners—and—I haven't. Good night!

DR. H. Here, don't go. I cannot. I could not stand and look in her eyes. It makes me shake when I think of it.

FORT. Well, put on a pad and let it prick a while.

MR. FL. Oh! don't leave me in the lurch. I really have not the heart to tell her. And yet it must be done, and at once. Help me out!

FORT. I'll tell you what we will do. Doctor and I will sit here and back you up—if you will do it right away—eh, Doctor?

DR. H. Well.

MR. H. That's much better than being alone with her. She will control herself before you—for Jane is very proud, Jane is. Yes, that's a capital arrangement. I don't hesitate at all now—it's wonderful what courage we— *calls Jane, Jane, Jane!*

J. (*without*) Yes, brother. *(Enters, c.)*

MR. FL. Are you busy, Jane?

J. Well, I was fixing your night plaster—that is all.

MR. FL. I have got something to say to you—very particularly. Sit down. *(sits, L.)*

J. (*aside*.) I know what's coming—all about death and will and my provision. I can't bear to think of it—and I am sure he can't. So I will make it as easy as possible for him.

MR. FL. Jane.

J. Yes, brother.

MR. FL. You and I have lived together alone a long time.

J. Yes, so we have—so long that if any change happened to one, I don't think the other would last very long.

MR. FL. Yes—but we are getting old, Jane—and rusty—and—

J. Yes, brother—we are both growing old—almost home—nothing left to do but to put everything in order. I can't bear

to think of it, but I cannot fail to realize that you have reached that age when you may be called away at any time. Nor can I blame you for dwelling upon it and preparing for it. It would not be right for you to do otherwise.

MR. FL. (*embarrassed*) Yes—Jane—Yes, of course, but aint you afraid that plaster will get cold if you don't attend to it?

J. (*surprised*) Of course it will—but I thought you wanted to speak to me.

MR. FL. (*innocently*) I?

J. Certainly, you called me. Your memory, Brother, I am afraid, is beginning to—

MR. FL. Not at all Jane—not at all. I remember perfectly, I did call you, but it's of no consequence—I'll tell you some other time, to-morrow—maybe.

J. Very well brother. Only I wish you had not called me away, I shall have it all to do over again. (*exit, c.*)

DR. H. Vell?

MR. FL. I couldn't—I couldn't.

DR. H. I don't blame you—vot you do now, my gracious?

MR. FL. Oh! I don't know. She'll have to know. Perhaps I'll write to her and then go out and spend the day.

FORT. Ahem! I suppose I could be retained *professionally* to do it myself.

MR. FL. (*delighted*) Will you?

FORT. I don't say I will, but I will say that I have yet to make my first refusal of any offered retainer—in any case—whatever.

MR. FL. (*delighted*) Name your own terms. I'll do it.

FORT. Here goes then. (*exit, c.*)

DR. H. Vot a shtomach hef die judicial mind for money my gracious.

#### CURTAIN.

SCENE II.—Room in house of MR. SHORT. Contrast to first Scene—Furniture modern and showy—much color—ornament, &c. When curtain rises, MR. S. at upper end table, c.; MRS. S., L.; EDITH and ELSIE, R., one on sofa, other on chair. All apparently much excited. ELSIE with MIGNONETTE in arms all through scene.

MRS. S. I ask you a simple question, Aristotle. It cannot require a very great expenditure of the intellect inherited from

your uncle the grammarian, with your euphonious name, to answer it.

MR. S. But, Matilda, what has that to do with it?

MRS. S. It has this to do with it, Aristotle, that *I*, your wife, ask you that question. Who weaned those girls?

MR. S. Well, I answer briefly, *you did*. But what that has to do with it—

MRS. S. You may well say *I did*. Yes, I was the one then. I was the one who slaved, and toiled and worried. I was the one who grated their gums early and late, who trotted their little pains with such maternal perseverance that we were complained of by the people under us for shaking the pendants off their chandelier. While *you*, *you* limited your care of your infant children to giving Edith *one* drink in the night, and that a drink of lamp oil from the night taper glass, and to waking me out of my sound sleep with “Matilda, I think Elsie’s got the croup again,” while you rolled over and slept—and snored. And now when the supreme moment of their lives has arrived, you think all this should go for nothing, and that *you* should be the only one to have a word to say. Oh! It’s just like you men—*self—self—self*.

MR. S. Well, Matilda, while you take breath for a fresh start, I will simply observe, that I don’t know what you mean by your *self—self—self*. I certainly do not want to marry the old gentleman myself. I doubt if I could legally, though law is a queer thing. I simply suggest that Edith being the eldest—

MRS. S. And your favorite.

MR. S. No, Mrs. Short, that is not true, as I have told you daily, since Elsie’s birth there is no difference in my affection for my two girls. I say, being the eldest—

MRS. S. Eldest. Stuff and nonsense! what possible difference can a year and eight months make to a century?

MR. S. Well, beside the question of age, I think Edith is more quiet and retiring, and less likely to have another chance. In fact I think Elsie a little better able to look around for herself. She has much of your strong, robust character, your—

MRS. S. (*passionately and growing almost hysterical*) That’s right, turn me into ridicule and make a butt of me. I’m your wife, so taunt me, slight me, trample on me, strike me, tear

me limb from limb. I am the mother of your children, so insult me, I am a—

MR. S. Now, Matilda, stop—*stop*—you are getting into one of your tantrums. I'll send for a pail of water. Remember how wet you got the last time you had one. \* (*Mrs. S. gradually during the following, sobs less and less violently and quiets down somewhat.*) If you will listen to me a moment and be rational, you will find there is no occasion for temper. I have no fixed determination in this matter. I have only suggested a preference. I am perfectly willing to change my mind for reasonable cause. It seems to me after all, the question better be left to the girls than settled by us; they are the principal parties interested. If they agree as between themselves, I shan't stand in the way, and I am sure, like a sensible woman, you will not.

Mrs. S. (*drying her eyes.*) Certainly not. As long as you talk reasonably and give Elsie the chance, I shall stand in nobody's way.

EDITH. Yes, but Ma, I want the old bag-o'-bones, and I think as Pa has had to work for us, and clothe us, and feed us all our lives, it ought to count for us as much as your trotting and weaning.

Mrs. S. Edith Lewellyn Grace Short, you are forgetting yourself!

ELSIE. I think poor, dear Ma is perfectly right to think that after all she's done for us she should not be allowed to say a single word—it's shameful.

MR. S. Elsie De Forest Nita Short, you are forgetting yourself!

EDITH. Elsie gets every single thing. She had her corn colored silk all made over new, while I have to wear mine without any change, except a nasty old overskirt that makes it look as old as the hills, and a little mean ruffle that makes it look as ugly as sin. (*undertone*) It's all partiality on Ma's part, that's what it is, and Pa has to pay for it all.

Mrs. S. Stop that everlasting grumbling!

ELSIE. Edith's engaged already, and I've been out of school six weeks, and this will be the first offer I've had, if it comes to me.

EDITH. Well, *what have I got?* Now, come; Lewin Greene—a great catch he is. Not one cent except what his Ma chooses to allow him, and won't have till she dies, and she is only forty-two,

and you know perfectly well that the engagement is only conditional. If I can do any better, I am to do it.

ELSIE. Well.

EDITH. Well. Didn't you make a time about it till you got just as good? Didn't Pa have to go get you your dog, so that neither one of us should have more than the other? And if it comes to that, you can have Lewin Greene, too, if you want him. If I can have the other.

ELSIE. Oh! Thanks; how kind. I wouldn't deprive you of the treasure.

EDITH. Well, Miss, you needn't stick up your nose at him; he beats nothing all to pieces.

ELSIE. Does he? I suppose that's the reason you thought it wise to take him.

EDITH. Ah! Ah! Smartie. You haven't had anything to "take."

ELSIE. Well, I wouldn't have taken him, if he had proposed till he was black in the face.

EDITH. You would, you would, you would. Sour grapes! sour grapes! (*During this discussion MR. and MRS. SHORT have been in earnest discussion.*)

MRS. S. What do we care for his comfort or his feelings, and as to that Elsie would be just as likely to make him happy as Edith, although, *of course*, you don't think so.

(*Enter LEWIN GREENE with book in hand, rushes to EDITH.*)

GREENE. I got it, Edie, I got it, you're welcome.

EDITH. (*impatiently*) What?

GREENE. Why, "The China Hunter's Adventures amongst Old Pots and Kettles," that you wanted so much, with one hundred and fifteen pictures. I got the money from Ma. She said you were making me—or, rather, her—awfully extravagant. But I don't care.

EDITH (*impatiently pushing it away.*) Oh! I don't want it now. I've something older than that to think about.

GREENE. (*surprised, looking from one to another.*) Why, anything wrong?

MRS. S. Only a proposal has been made for Elsie, and, as usual, Mr. S. must have a discussion about it.

GREENE. Why, that's awfully jolly, Elsie. Who is it?

EDITH. It wasn't made for Elsie any more than for me. He has always said and written, "one of your daughters," without saying which. He don't know us apart.

GREEN (*eagerly*). Yes; but gracious me, Edie! You couldn't go and accept any—any offer. You're mine, you know.

EDITH. No, I'm not. You know perfectly well it was only conditional upon nothing better turning up, and something better has turned up.

GREEN. Yes; but you surely won't throw me overboard. Oh, please don't. After the heaps of things I've given you, or rather that ma has given you. Why, I've got so used to coming here evenings and things, it would seem awfully funny to me not to.

EDITH. Well go to Elsie; she'll have you, she's so loving and sisterly and obliging to-night.

ELSIE. No, I won't. Edith can keep you for ever and ever, for all I care. She wants everything—greedy.

GREEN. Yes; but Mr. and Mrs. Short, please think of me a little in this matter; I'm so awfully fond of Edie. I've told Ma that if anything should happen between Elsie and I, it would drive me to something wicked. I believe I'd smoke, and that would almost kill Ma. Let Edie—

(*Mr. and Mrs. S. have continued their discussion.*)

MR. S (*impatiently*). Will you keep quiet, sir. Don't add to this pan tomonium. It's enough to drive a man distracted, as it is.

EDITH. Well, I should think Pa might be master in his own house without all this talk.

MRS. S. Edith Lewellyn Grace Short, you are forgetting yourself again!

ELSIE. And I should think Ma might have her own way once in a while!

MR. SHORT. Silence!

MRS. S. Oh, no, my daughter, your Ma has no right to any opinion; she is only fit to be turned into ridicule, to be made a butt of. (*Bursting into tears, and gradually becoming excited.*)

MR. S. (*losing all patience*). Stop—stop! Edith, go tell them to send up a pail of water; the colder, the better; and if that won't stop it, I tell you as sure as my name is Aristotle Short, I'll send word to the old man that he sha'n't have either; that we decline his offer *altogether*.



Mrs. S. (*sobbered.*) Oh! You don't mean that. You can't mean that. I'll try to be calm, I really will. I feel I can control myself now. Why this is the one chance of our lives. You say times are so hard, and business dull, and you tell us we must be so economical, and all at once this offer comes like—a—a rainbow of promise. I won't be naughty any more, Aristotle, only please don't speak about declining the offer. It takes my breath away.

Mr. S. Well then, come to a settlement at once. He will be here at eight o'clock, and it only wants ten minutes of it. There must not be one trace of this ridiculous squabble seen.

Mrs. S. I don't know who is squabbling, as you inelegantly call it.

Mr. S. Oh, I am, of course, all by myself.

Mrs. S. (*counselingly.*) Now Aristotle, dear husband, don't be ill-tempered; let's settle this at once—you and me. Say Elsie, and I'll be a real good, amiable wife all the rest of my life—and never, never have a tantrum again, if—if I can help it.

Mr. S. It would do no good for us to agree—look there!

(EDITH and ELISIE *seen making faces at one another, and LEWIN, in despair, watching EDITH's every movement.*)

EDITH. Well, I want him, anyhow!

ELISIE. So do I, and I guess my wants are just as good as yours.

GREENE. (*complainingly.*) But please, somebody, think of my trouble. I can't bear to think of leaving this family—it's a nice family, a real nice family, and I like to belong to it.

Mr. S. (*peremptorily.*) *Will you keep quiet?* You don't belong to this family yet, and if you say one word more to add to this confusion, you never will!

(LEWIN *subsides, and bursts into tears.*)

EDITH. (*sobbing.*) I've always just longed and longed to wear mourning, and if I got the old man I would soon have a chance.

ELISIE. (*sobbing.*) And you know how bewitching I'd look in a widow's cap; and I've longed and longed for that, and if I married the old man, I'd soon have a chance.

(*Door bell heard.*)

Mr. S. There, I thought so, he's come, and a pretty state you're all in. Confound it all! It's just my luck!

EDITH. Well, I don't want to give him up.

ELSIE. Neither do I—and I won't—

Mr. S. (*saragely.*) Then I'll tell you what it is, either you two girls settle this in a minute, while the old gentleman is getting his wraps off, and just as I tell you, or back home he will go just as he came. There is only one way left now, and that is to put him up; to raffle for him between you, as you would for a sofa cushion at a fair.

Mrs. S. Aristotle J. Short, are you mad?

Mr. S. Yes, I am; and I shall have a tantrum in a moment that no amount of cold water will quiet. I have spent no end of money on you two girls, your boarding schools, your music, and your art, and you haven't learned the first rudiments of decency yet.

Mrs. S. Oh dear! oh dear! (*dropping into despondency, &c.*)

Mr. S. Here—(*taking coin from his pocket*). I've got a trade dollar in one of my hands. It's a very good representation, to my mind, of the value of the grand prize we are all after. Now, choose—quick—which hand will you have? The one that gets the dollar shall have the husband.

(*Levin peeks around, trying to see where the coin is*  
*Great excitement. The girls protest.*)

Mr. S. I hear him: I think he has started up-stairs—quick, now or never!

ELSIE. Well, if I *must*,—I take the *right*.

EDITH. I was going to say that myself—I want it.

ELSIE. Well, I said it first.

EDITH. Well, I said it second, and I'm the oldest.

Mr. S. All right; if you can't even agree on that, home he goes.

ELSIE. Well, I want the right—I said it first, and I'm going to stick to it, if he does go home.

EDITH. Oh, take it. I'll take your leavings as usual; give me the other—the left.

Mr. S. (*Presenting hands, shows coin in left.*) Edith, it's yours—yours, my little duck, and just as I wanted it.

ELSIE. Well, take it—piggie—piggie! Ah!

GREENE. (*In despair.*) Oh! Edie, and ain't I going to have you? What shall I say to Ma—what will Ma say to me?

EDITH. Oh! go away. Go to Elsie. She'll have you now; I know her.

MRS. S. Well, I've seen disgraceful things, but this is the disgracefullest; and if I didn't hear him panting up the stairs, I wouldn't submit to it. But it's too late now, and we must make the best of it. Here, get into some sort of decent positions, quick. (*Thrusts SHORT into chair, c., and tosses him paper; forces GREENE in chair, L., and gives him the book brought by him, held upside down; places EDITH on sofa, and ELSIE on floor by her side; seizes a tidy from chair and paper cutter from table, and pretends to be busily working.*)

MRS. S. Now, you two girls, the moment he shows himself, I want you to smile sweetly at each other. Now!

(*Mr. F. appears at c., tottering in, and then stops, apparently pleased, contemplating the family picture.—The girls, who have been making faces at one another, smile the moment he appears, and continue to smile as long as he stands there.*)

MR. F. Ah! A charming family picture. Home, sweet home.

MR. S. (*Starting up as if surprised.*) Ah! My dear sir, (*shakes hands with him,*) you startled me. Why, I had no idea it was yet eight o'clock. Mrs. Short you have met; my daughters Edith and Elsie; and Mr. Greene, I think, you know. (*LEWIS GREENE eyes him ferociously.*) Time passes very quickly in the bosom of one's family.

MR. F. Yes, yes; and such a family. It looks very sweet to me; smiling faces, busy fingers; peace and love and unity.

MR. S. Yes, sir, that's—ahem—*peace and love and unity.*

MR. F. You are a happy man, Mr. Short, and even my old eyes can see this is a happy, happy home.

MR. S. Yes, sir—a happy, happy home, (*aside,*) and it's fortunate his eyes are no younger. (*He helps the old gentleman into a seat—Mrs. S. busies herself about him.*)

MRS. S. Does it feel warm enough for you, my dear sir? Aristotle, darling, perhaps you had better close the register in the hall, and there will be more heat here. Edith, my own, get the foot-rest from the other room.

EDITH. Yes, precious Ma. (*exit.*)

MRS. S. Elsie, my bird, where is the hand-screen, perhaps the light is too strong for Mr. Flush.

FLUSH. Oh! my dear madame. (*Enter EDITH with foot-rest, which she places in front of him, and he raises one foot slowly and places it upon it with evident pain.*) Thanks—please don't take so much trouble. I am very comfortable, I assure you, and am charmed with all this generous attention.

Mrs. S. Don't mention it.

Mr. S. Don't mention it, sir, you are always welcome here. For years my wife and children and myself have been at a distance looking upon you with regard and admiration, as one of the few men who have come down to us—in a—with a—through a series of years in which for whom—the regard of all—

EDITH. (*aside to him.*) Pa, you've lost your nominative.

Mr. S. Yes, it's gone, (*coughs repeatedly.*) Oh! dear; I can't seem to get out of this cold, somehow.

Mrs. S. Aristotle, dear. (*motions with her head.*)

Mr. S. Yes. You will excuse Mrs. Short and myself, Mr. Flush, if we now yield to the kind wishes you have expressed to us, and give you an opportunity of addressing our eldest daughter on the subject you have mentioned to us. It will be a great surprise to the dear girl. We have carefully kept all suspicion of your purpose from her. Mr. Greene, you and Elsie will please come with us. (*Aside to FLUSH.*) I wish you every success, but I cannot assure you of it. We long ago determined never to influence our daughter's choice. Marriage has always seemed to us so solemn a thing, that no thought should be allowed to enter into the motives actuating it, ah—or their initiation—which that—not—is not—or rather, should not be—whenever—

EDITH. Pa, dear. (*looking at him.*)

Mr. S. (*Violently coughing again.*) Matilda, darling, I'll take something for my cough, to-night.

*Mr. and Mrs. S., Elsie, Greene, and Mignonette ex-  
eunt, C.*

(*Edith on sofa, R., pause. Mr. F., apparently a little flustered, takes out handkerchief and mops his head. Edith expressing in her face intense eagerness to have him begin.*)

EDITH. It's been a pleasant day.

Mr. F. Yes—yes; very mild and bright.

EDITH. I like pleasant days better than stormy ones, don't you sir?

MR. F. Oh, yes, yes, my dear—I do so.

EDITH. Yes, sir, so do I. (*Pause continues.*)

EDITH. Yesterday was a pleasant day, sir.

MR. F. Yes, yes; so it was, my dear—yes—(*apparently absent minded, thinking of what to say—another pause.*)

EDITH. Day before yesterday was not very pleasant?

MR. F. No, no; it was not—no.

EDITH. Day before that was pleasant. (*aside*) Why don't he begin? he cannot expect me to do all the entertaining.

MR. F. My dear Miss Edith—your name is Edith?

EDITH. Yes, sir—Edith Lewellyn Grace Short.

MR. F. A pretty name. Well, my dear Miss Edith, let me ask you if you will be so kind as to take a seat near me. I am not as young as I was, and cannot move about very freely. (*Edith takes slow chair, and sits near him on left.*) Will you excuse me if I rub my back a moment. I seem to have a special knick in it to-night. (*rubs.*) Ah, you've never had lumbago, have you?

EDITH. (*Smiling sweetly.*) No, sir, but I've often thought I'd like to. I—I—took a great interest in the subject when at school. It always had a fascination for me.

MR. F. (*Looking at her admiringly.*) (*aside.*) Intelligent girl! (*aloud.*) I've had it off and on for forty years. You—have you—ever thought anything about marriage?

EDITH. (*starting—surprised.*) Oh! No, sir. Ma and Pa have always been very particular not to let us think about any such thing, and sister and I never think of thinking of anything that Ma and Pa think we ought not to think about.

MR. F. No, no—of course not. That's a good girl. I like to see *that*; obedience to parents is a great virtue. And I like your simple and pure-mindedness; it's a rebuke to the slanders upon this age. Some people are continually slandering it.

EDITH. Are they, sir? I suppose you will think me a very silly, ignorant child; but sister and I have been so brought up and kept at school and so on, that we don't know anything about the age, or the world, or any naughty thing of that kind. All we know about is what was in our books, and that we love our darling Pa and Ma, and that we love each other.

MR. F. (*Putting handkerchief to eyes, affected.*) My dear, it affects me to see such sweet, childlike love and innocence, and I only wish my sister Jane could be here, and I am sure she would change her mind about you.

EDITH. Is your sister Jane like you, sir?

MR. F. Yes, my dear, very like me in many things.

EDITH. Oh, then I do wish she was here, too—very much.

MR. (*aside.*) Charming little bird. Well, my dear Edith, I have your parent's permission to speak to you about marriage, and to ask you to think about it. I want you to think about it now. If you should ever marry, what kind of a man would you select for a husband?

EDITH. (*cogly.*) Will Pa and Ma let me think of that too?

MR. F. Yes; now would it not be a young man, handsome, strong, and full of fun and frolic and spirits, who would take you out into the gay world, and fill your cup full of it's pleasures?

EDITH. (*looking off dreamily.*) No, sir—that is not my thought; such a one would not make married life what my ideal of it is, a home-life full of love, and peace and unity—home, sweet home!

MR. F. (*aside, greatly delighted.*) It seems as if I had happened upon the one girl in all the world for me.

EDITH. I think I should take one who had had long experience of life; who had reached its full, ripe evening time—some one who would depend on me; some one whom I could care for, tend and nurse as well as love. It may seem an odd notion, but I have never known a grandfather, and have all the natural craving for such a one still unsatisfied.

MR. F. (*aside.*) Charming, charming! Oh! if Jane were only here, how ashamed she'd be for the way she's talked about these girls. (*aloud.*) One thing more. Do you have any feeling when you think about it, that you would like your husband to have money, say a great deal of it, or you would not care to marry him?

EDITH. (*smiling sadly.*) That is not my thought, sir. If he has money enough to rent an humble cottage with a honeysuckle creeping on the porch, it would be enough.

MR. F. (*delighted.*) Well, Edith, I am thinking of taking a



wife, and I am going to ask you, although I don't know exactly how to do it.

EDITH. (*in calm and unexcited tone.*) Are you going to propose to me now—right away?

Mr. F. Yes—yes, such was my intention.

EDITH. (*rising.*) Excuse me one moment. (*Exit, c.*)

Mr. F. Dear, dear, dear. This is the greatest piece of luck I ever had; to pick out, almost in the dark, the very girl suited for my wife; artless, natural, pure-hearted, loving, tender, and unselfish. I really wish I had brought Jane along. Now Jane said in her excitement, that no one would think of marrying an old man like me, except some base, selfish, grasping girl, who would do it to get at my money. Oh, Jane, Jane, you don't know anything about the girl of to-day; and yet she will persist in thinking that she does, the dear old foolish thing.

EDITH *enters with four duodecimo volumes in hand.*

EDITH. I got the manuals for us, sir, to save time. Shall I find the places?

Mr. F. Manuals?

EDITH. Yes. Society's Liturgy; you must have seen it, sir. Has all the forms and uses of society in it, so you only have to read it like the Church Service. It saves ever so much time and trouble, and the beauty of it is you don't have to think what you are saying. We use them almost all together. We got them so that we would not make any mistake. Pa is very particular about that in our language. You know his uncle was Professor Aristotle J. Short, the grammarian. Pa's very proud of that, and thinks we all have inherited some of uncle's grammar. Pa uses beautiful language, but is a great one to lose his nominative. Ma is a very fluent talker, too. I suppose she inherits some of it by marriage.

(*During this EDITH has been finding places. Hands book to Mr. F.*)

EDITH. Page 32, Form 16, I suppose, is what we want.

Mr. F. Ah, yes, let me put on my other glasses. Oh, my back, whenever I feel in my pockets. Won't you take them out for me, my dear? (*she does so.*) Thank you. Ah, yes, I've heard of these, I've seen one of them, the "Caller's Manual." It was left at the

house by some one who called on Jane. Jane couldn't seem to get over it. She isn't up with the age, Jane isn't. And this is certainly an age of improvement. Do I begin?

EDITH. Yes, sir, page 32.

MR. F. Ah, yes, let me see. Form 16. "Proposal of elderly male to young female party."

MR. F. (*reads.*) "My dear child, I have something to say to you which may fill you with surprise."

EDITH. (*reads.*) "You have, sir, my best attention."

MR. F. (*reads.*) "I desire to offer you my hand in marriage."

EDITH. (*reads.*) "Sir! you astonish me beyond measure."

MR. F. (*reads.*) "Will you be mine?"

EDITH. (*reads.*) "With pleasure."

MR. F. Why, that seems to be all. I like it. There's a simplicity about it, and no embarrassment. Oh, my back, my back! (*rubs it.*)

EDITH. I'll go get Ma and Pa to come and read their parts, and as soon as they get through I can rub your back for you; it would be quite proper then. (*exit.*)

MR. F. This is a great world. Manuals for love-making! What won't they get up next. Oh Jane, Jane, you are way behind the age!

*Enter EDITH, preceding Mr. and Mrs. S., who come in arm-in-arm, and very sedately sit on right. EDITH finds place for Mr. F. and hands him Manual.*

MR. F. (*reads.*) "Mr. and Mrs. Short, I love your daughter with an affection entirely in accord with the rules of etiquette and good society. I have asked her to be mine. She has replied in the affirmative, and has referred me to you to complete our bliss. My means are ample. I am well matured in years; but though my head is touched by the frost of time, my heart has not yet been chilled by its breath."

MR. S. (*solemnly.*) Edith, hand me the "Parents' Manual," at the proper page. (*takes it and reads.*) "My wife and myself, sir, learn with great surprise that you, a mere child, have formed an attachment for our daughter. When we allowed you to grow up together the thought of marriage never entered our heads. You are both too young to think of such a thing. Let everything remain as it is for one year. No formal engagement

meanwhile." Edith, this can't be right. Eh! Oh, pshaw! the wrong form, sir.

Mrs. S. I've told you, Aristotle, you must come to glasses.

Mr. S. Well, with a son of eighty-three, I guess I shall have to. Ah, here we are. (*reads.*) "Respected sir, we take your offer kindly. It is accepted. We weep the loss of a dear and loving daughter, but are comforted by the thought that your means are ample, and that though your head be touched by the frost of time, your heart has not yet been chilled by its icy breath. Take the paternal blessing, and forgive these tears."

*Hands book to Mrs. S., who screws up her eyes to examine same, and finds place.*

Mrs. S. "My children, bless you. Never will the mother's heart cool toward you; never will the mother's eye leave you; never will the mother's hand be wanting in any of your affairs; and her heart is glad when she feels that she adds to her little flock one whose means are ample, and whose head is touched by the frost of time, but whose heart has not yet been chilled by its icy breath. Take the maternal blessing and forgive these tears."

Mr. F. Is that all?

Mr. S. That is all. Nothing very terrible about it.

Mr. F. No; short and practical. Is it proper, Edith, now, for you to rub my back: you said it would be?

EDITH. (*sweetly.*) It is quite proper now, sir. ( *rubs slightly.* *Clock strikes nine while EDITH is rubbing, FLESH starts.*)

Mr. F. Oh dear, it's my bedtime. Nine o'clock, summer and winter. for fifty-five years. I told Jane I would be back by a quarter to nine. What will she say? How time has flown! I must go. Good night, Mrs. Short and Mr. Short. Good night, Edie (*chucks her under chin*). My little birche! I'll be around early in the morning, and will talk over all the arrangements. I want all possible haste used at my time of life.

Mr. S. Well, sir, we will be delighted to see you at all hours and times. We will wait on you to the door.

Mr. F. No, no. I can get along very well. I had my foot-bottle sent into the kitchen from the carriage, to be kept warm.

Mr. S. That was quite right. Edith, go see to it. (*exit Edith, c.*) Let Mrs. S. and myself help you down. (*each take an arm.*)

MR. F. I'm giving you too much trouble.

MRS. S. Don't speak of it. You are *my* boy now, and you will have plenty of opportunity to pay it all back.

MR. F. Thank you, (*tottering out between them*,) thank you. I'm so happy. Oh, my back! (*LEWIN peeps in L.*)

GREENE. They've gone—come in. (*Enter Elsie carrying MIGNONETTE. Looking at table and at Mutuals.*) There they are. Let's do it.

ELSIE. Oh! Don't bother to-night.

GREENE. I think you might. I want to tell Ma, when I have to tell her I've lost Edie, that I've got the other in the same family, or she'll be awfully cross after the presents I have given away, or rather, she has given away. Say yes, please, I'm awfully fond of you. Just since we've been in the other room I've got fond of you. Just as fond of you as I was of Edie; and I was awfully fond of her—so Ma said.

ELSIE. Oh! well, we might as well have it over with. I want to be engaged, and I want to wear a ring. I'll take you, but just as Edie did, on condition that I cannot do better. And there is one little thing, Lewin. You know I love Mignonette, that I love him with all my heart and soul, and mind and strength. He is my first love; that is, I think he is, although I used to have a guinea pig, I believe. But whether he is or not, I love him now, wildly, passionately, to distraction, and if you can take a place in a heart that is wholly and entirely given to another, I am yours, until I find some one else, and then you must promise to give me up, without talking or making any fuss.

GREENE. I'll do it. I didn't expect you would ever love me as you do Mignonette, you know, and I'll be perfectly satisfied to come next to him. What I want is to belong to this family.

ELSIE. And you'll give me a real diamond ring?

GREENE. Well, I'll get the one I gave Edith. I wouldn't like to ask Ma for another so soon.

ELSIE. Well, I suppose that will do. But I must have it by next Sunday.

GREENE. And now we're really engaged?

ELSIE. Yes—yes; but don't talk about it.

EDITH *rushes in, followed by MRS. S., c., throws her arms around ELSIE and then around her mother.*

EDITH. Oh, congratulate me somebody—anybody—everybody. I am the happiest girl in the world. I can't keep still. Come, let's have a dance. Come, Elsie. (*Seizes* ELSIE, *who seizes* LEWIN, *who seizes* MRS. S., *who seizes* MR. S., *who has just entered; they dance around the centre table dragged by* EDITH.)

EDITH. Just think; perhaps this time next year I shall be a widow; a rich, young, pretty widow.

ELSIE. I won't dance any more. You get everything, greedy.

GREENE. You've got me, now, Elsie, you know.

ELSIE. Bah! Let me alone; go home to your Ma.

MR. S. Come, Elsie, no more ill-temper to-night.

MRS. S. Well, you can't blame the child for feeling disappointed, Aristotle. It isn't in nature not to wish to be a widow if you can.

ELSIE. Well, I know what I hope. *I hope he'll live forever!*

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SCENE III. (*The same.*—LEWIN GREENE *discovered on sofa, holding* MIGNONETTE.)

GR. It ain't much fun to be engaged; to have other fellows off with your girl, and you home with the dog. I felt awful bad about losing Edie for nearly a week. I had just got so I could keep step with her when she took my arm, and then I had to go and learn that all over again, for every girl steps different from every other girl, somehow. I don't know why she should. This dog is the worst of Elsie. She never can love anybody but him, she tells me so all the time, and I know she can't. And I get awful jealous of him. He's my rival, that's what he is—my hated rival, and it's mighty hard on me. Why some fellows get mad at their rivals if they just see 'em playing tunes to their girls under their windows. Ma's got a picture of it. I wonder how they'd like to hold their rivals in their laps all day, and comb their hair, and hold them up for their girl to kiss. It's enough to make a fellow crazy, when you come to think about it, and some of these times I'll get desperate, I know I shall, and just go and revenge myself. And I know what I'll do, too—I'll just put him down on the floor, and let him take care of himself!

*Enter* MRS. S., *holding card, followed by* BRIDGET. *The*

*manner of the former very obsequious, the latter bold and presuming.*

Mrs. S. Walk right in here, Madame. Be kind enough to sit down. I see by your card that your name is—

BRID. (*in loud voice.*) *Miss Bridget Begorra!*

Mrs. S. And you are introduced by Mrs. Livingstone De Peyster Van Cortlandt. I am proud to make your acquaintance.

BRID. (*patronizingly.*) You've rather a nate house for a shmall one, but I don't loike the pattern of your shtair-carpet at all. It's awful oogly.

Mrs. S. I am truly sorry. What position did you hold with Mrs. Livingstone De Peyster Van Cortlandt?

BRID. Cook and companion. "Bid," says she—she's always a callin' me pit names, we're so intimate togeth'er—"they're lookin' for a lady in sarvice up to Broker Short's." So up I comes.

Mrs. S. I need not say that the introduction is more than sufficient. What I desire to obtain are the services of a French maid for myself and my youngest daughter. You could fill that position?

BRID. Frinch is it? Listin to this: "Pollywow—dam sell." How's that for accint?

Mrs. S. I've no doubt it's exceedingly pure. I'm not acquainted with the language myself. My daughters are, however, and my husband is the nephew of Professor Short, the celebrated grammarian. Your principal duty will be to wear a French cap and keep continually following us around with something over your arm. The fact is, we are about to have a very great change in our affairs. Day after to-morrow our eldest daughter, Miss Edith, will marry old Mr. Flush, the millionaire.

BRID. Yis; I heard your friends sayin' you had your hook in the ould fellow's gills.

Mrs. S. We shall of course at once break up here, and go and live upon our new son-in-law; and our style of living will be very much improved, and of course a French maid becomes a necessity.

FRIDGET. If ye soot me, mum, the Frinch will be no objection. I'm towld they're a daicent paiple when they're sober and paiceful.



Mrs. S. I am ready. (*Moves her chair around so as to face BRIDGET, and throws herself back resignedly.*) Have you your Manual with you? We have a set if you have not.

BRID. Yes, mum. (*Producing the Manual, finds place, reads, occasionally eying Mrs. S. sternly.*) How minny in the family?

Mrs. S. Here there are four. When we move—

BRID. (*sternly.*) Answer the Question simple and plain, no whins, or ifs, or ands.

Mrs. S. I beg pardon—I will; six.

BRID. Do you kape horses?

Mrs. S. We shall.

BRID. Whose convaniance is fust consulted in the use of the carriages?

Mrs. S. The gentlemen and ladies in service, of course.

BRID. Is it understood that the tooth-brushes and ither tilitt articles belonging to the ladies in sarvice shall not be used by minbers of the family?

Mrs. S. It is.

BRID. Has the bids of the ladies in sarvice piller shams?

Mrs. S. They will have.

BRID. Will—so far it's satisfactory; but you niver kin tell. I can't shtop now to go through with the ithers. Miss Van Cortlandt and me is used to take a little tay and toast together at 8:30. Yer say yer hev a Manual?

Mrs. S. Yes, we have one.

BRID. Well, just write out in a nate hand the answers to the remainin 86 questions, and send thim around with yer card, and I'll look em over whin I git toime and consider your application.

Mrs. S. You are very kind.

BRID. If I should conclude to come with yer, I should ixpect yer to do all me work. Forty dollars a month, Mondays, Widnisdays, Fridays, Sundays, and ivery aivining to myself. Yer sittin room, library, and parlor to be used in common betwixt us if we happen to hev company at the same toime. You're to furnish all me clothes, and none of your home-made duds, aither. Not to be disturbed in the mornin' airlier thin 10:30, and at all owers to be trated like one of the family. Good aivinin, mum. Is there iny other way out, mum? I hate to hev to go over thet oogly

shtair carpet agin. I've been attendin' some art lectures, lately, and it's that oogly it makes me hid iteh.

Mrs. S. Allow me, and I'll show you down the back stairs and to avoid it.

BR. Is that yer bye, there, tindin dog? (*referring to LEWIN.*)

Mrs. S. That is a friend of the family, my youngest daughter's intended.

BR. Will, I should think it would be Hobsin's chice between the two of em, with the odds of two ligs in the dog's favor.  
*[Exeunt R.]*

GR. There's nothing like one of them women to tone a person down. If I was Mr. Short I'd just keep one around all the time, and set her on Mrs. Short whenever she has a tantrum. It took two pails of water, the other night, and then she did not stop till she'd torn the bosom out of Mr. Short's shirt. And just because he wanted to have some wine at the wedding breakfast, and she said it was sinful, and a bad example to be set by church members. (*Enter Mrs. S. helping MR. FLUSH to chair by table.*)

Mrs. S. It's too bad Edith is out again. She wouldn't go to the funeral at the Woodwiddies, yesterday, because they owed us a call. But they came around last evening and left their cards, and invited the girls to the Crepe party, to-night and said the flowers were so elegant, that the girls went. But they'll be home early, if you can wait.

Mr. F. Crepe party? I'm such an old fogie, and know so little about young people's affairs, that I don't really know just what a Crepe party is, although I've often heard of them. But I must learn all about such things now.

Mrs. S. They're quite the style this winter. This is the fifteenth the girls have attended. They are given by the family to show off the flowers sent to the funeral. The rooms are decorated with them. They have round dances and a supper, and everybody wears a black crepe bow and black gloves. They break up early, as the family are generally tired with watching and riding to the grave, and so on.

Mr. F. Well, I hope my little birdie is enjoying herself.

Mrs. S. She deserves to. Never did I see such love and devotion. Yesterday I went up to her room to take up the Pert's wedding present which had just come in—a half pound of

caramels. It wasn't much for those rich people, was it? When I saw her reading, I just peeped over her shoulder, and what do you think it was?

Mr. F. (*delighted*.) I don't know, maybe the note I sent with the watch and chain.

Mrs. S. No. Dr. Lambert's "Essay on Longevity"—"How Long can he Live?"

Mr. F. Dear little girl.

Mrs. S. She asks everybody she sees if they know you, and what you are worth, and where your property is.

Mr. F. Sweet little bird. How touching such love is. I could sit for hours and hear you talk about it.

Mrs. S. Did I tell you about Sunday week? No? You know the Rev. Mr. Namm was at our church that day; our girls think there is no one like him. Elsie says if anything in the world could make her a devotee for life, it would be his monstache. Well, he preached a most beautiful sermon, all about the heathen and the cactus flowers that grow there, and the different kinds of humming birds they have. I saw several people crying when he spoke some poetry about them. He always speaks some poetry, and this was beautiful; every verse ended "Hum and come, come and hum, ye humming birds." Edith seemed perfectly carried away. She leaned clear forward, and her eyes had such an intent look in them, that I didn't know but what the dear impulsive girl would get right up, and start off for a missionary on foot. And I asked her afterward what she had been thinking about, and she said she was wondering about something; wondering if your house had any encumbrance upon it, and how many feet it fronted on High Street.

Mr. F. The dear, little, bewitching, practical thing! To neglect the poor heathen for thoughts of me. It makes me very happy, and she is so artless, and childlike and ingenuous with it all.

Mrs. S. Yes, sir. We've tried to keep her so. Girls, now-a-days, are brought forward too soon. I never allowed either of my girls to go to a children's party, when they couldn't be home by midnight, before they were five years old. And Edith was nearly fourteen, when she graduated the oldest in her class.

Mr. F. I see many evidences, dear Madame, of your careful training; but it is getting toward my bed-time, and I cannot

break my habit without feeling the effects of it to-morrow and that will be a busy day. When must I go to the Church for the rehearsals, as you call them?

Mrs. S. Two o'clock.

Mr. F. And we rehearse the whole service?

Mrs. S. Yes, Dr. Gaybird called here this morning about it. He said he would give us three rehearsals, and a dress rehearsal, Benediction and all. He said if you got tired you could lie down in the front pew, between them, and you had better take a pillow and your liniment, for probably your back will need an occasional rubbing, before you get through.

Mr. F. Thank you. I'll be there. Ah, I thought there was something else. I've brought a draft of my Will, as you and Mr. S. requested. Fortew drew it. I will execute it just as soon as we are married. It is just as we arranged it; everything to my beloved little wife Edith, and a simple request that she will provide for dear Jane as long as she lives.

Mrs. S. Edith will be glad of that. She said the other day that she hoped you would have the dear old thing left to her. We will look the Will over, and consult Mr. Fortew as our attorney about it, and send it to you as soon as possible.

Mr. F. Yes, do so; and now I must say good-night. My very best love to Edie, and—a—a-kiss. I brought some flowers for her, and among them she'll find a little note.

Mrs. S. Oh! you silly, romantic, dear old boy. She'll be delighted.

*He totters towards door—Mrs. S. follows.*

Mr. F. No, no. I insist, my dear Madame; let me go myself, this time. I must act spry and look spry—for day after to-morrow I shall be a bridegroom—he-he-he! (*exit L.*)

GREENE. (*yawning.*) I say, Mrs. Short, ain't it most time for the girls? It's awful pokey for me here.

Mrs. S. (*compassionately.*) Yes, poor boy, I dare say it is, and Lewin, I don't believe you will ever be rewarded for all your devotion, for I feel quite certain that as soon as we are all settled on Mr. Flush, and launch out in the style we intend, Elsie will be able to do much better.

GREENE. Oh! Mrs. Short, don't talk that way. It takes so awful long to get acquainted with a new girl before you can keep

step with her or ask her to marry you, that it would discourage me awfully to have to break off our engagement.

*Enter Mr. S., hurriedly.*

Mrs. S. (*quickly*) Well, Aristotle, is it sold?

Mr. S. Yes. I insisted upon it and it's sold just as it stands, furniture and all.

Mrs. S. Well we are in luck lately.

Mr. S. I had to make a great sacrifice though.

Mrs. S. (*starting*) A sacrifice! What sacrifice? You didn't throw anything off the price, did you?

Mr. S. No. I had to sacrifice our old friends.

Mrs. S. Oh, pshaw, how you startled me.

Mr. S. Yes, they got indignant and then angry, and said that if I insisted on enforcing the hard bargain, as they called it, and on taking advantage of a technicality and of their having had so much confidence in me, they would carry out the purchase, but that should be the end of all friendly relations between us forever. I told them I never allowed feelings to interfere with business, and so we've lost our oldest friends, but we've sold our house and furniture for a thousand dollars more than they're worth.

Mrs. S. Well, the old fellow's been here drivelling again. He brought the draft of his will. There it is (*handing it to S.*) Now we want to be very careful to have that just right. Ah! here are the girls.

*Enter EDITH and ELSIE in full evening dress and black gloves.*

EDITH. (*throws herself on chair, L.*) I am tired out.

ELSIE. (*rushes up to MIGNONETTE and takes him out of LEWIN'S arms paying no attention to GREENE*) How has my little angel been since his mamma has been gone, kiss 'em—kiss 'em.

GR. (*aside, grinding his teeth*) That makes me maddest. To have to stand by and hear the kisses pop. (*Aloud.*) Elsie, did you have a good, jolly time?

ELSIE. Yes, only I got provoked. I was waltzing with Alfred Tennyson Jones, when his wife had to come up and tell him she had just got a message from their nurse that the

doctor had called, as they ordered, to see their baby, and pronounced it diphtheria. Well, who cared? I didn't, and I am sure Alfred didn't, for he squeezed my hand and said "Deuce take it," in a tone which plainly meant, take the baby. And I am sure Mrs. J. didn't, for she said she was having a lovely time and wouldn't go at all, only some people had heard the message delivered, and she was afraid it would make talk if they didn't go, and anything happened to the baby before morning. I think he's lovely. I do love married men—to flirt with.

Mrs. S. Why, Edie, you seem to be in the dumps. What's the matter?

EDITH. I have got the blues, that's all. A horrid thought has fairly haunted me for two hours. I was dancing a galop with Horace Porter. I danced eight with him this evening, bless the old lazy darling. He's got such a long soft beard to put your face against when you dance, and it always smells so nice and strong of lemons and mint and things. Well, he got telling me about his two sisters and himself, and how hard his old grandfather worked to support them. And I asked him how old his grandfather was, and he said he was ninety years old, and they hoped he would live longer. And then the horrid thought flashed right in my mind, suppose my old man should live on—and on and on—to be as old as that. Why that would be *seven* years!

Mr. S. Well, darling, don't worry about it. Here's something to cheer you up, the draft of his will that he left for us to look over.

EDITH. Give it to me (*takes it*). I'll take it up and read it in bed.

Mrs. S. He is going to leave the old woman to you.

EDITH. Good! I'll pay her up, the stingy thing, for sending me a mean old bed quilt for a wedding present, with a label stuck on it to say it was all worked after her seventy-sixth birthday. As if we cared! Good night (*going*).

Mrs. S. Oh, Edith (*mockingly*), I like to forget. Here are some flowers and a love-letter he left for you.

EDITH. (*carelessly*) Just look in the letter and see if there is anything more substantial than *love* in it.

Mrs. S. (*opening letter and holding up to light*) No.

EDITH. Then I don't want the old rubbish (*exit L*).

Mr. S. Good, sensible girl. No romantic nonsense about her.

Mrs. S. So she is. But you will find Elsie will be just as sensible, though of course *you* don't think so.

GR. (*who has had no attention, MIGNONETTE having absorbed all*) Well, I guess I'll go. Good night all.

ELSIE. Be around in plenty of time to dry Mignonette in the morning after his bath.

GR. Yes, I will. (*aside*) I'm getting to hate that dog so that one of these days I'll—I'll *twist his tail* (*exit*).

ELSIE. (*rising, holding up MIGNONETTE toward Mr. and Mrs. S.*) Say good night to zoo own grannies, by-by, shakes zoo paw (*exeunt*).

Mrs. S. Aristotle, can you realize it? Day after to-morrow!

Mr. S. Edith married!

Mrs. S. And I his mother-in-law.

Mr. S. Well, Matilda, somehow or other it is easier for me to imagine that part of it than the other.

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## ACT II.

SCENE—Room in house of Mr. FLUSH same as first—much changed in furniture and ornament—*bric-a-brac* on walls, etc.

*Enter JANE, C.*

J. (*excitedly*), Talk, talk, talk! scold, scold, scold! contradict, quarrel, wrangle and hammer from morning till night until I'm almost crazy. Not satisfied with marrying my poor, dear old brother to a chit of a girl in her teens, who cares no more for him than for the dirt under her high French heels—not satisfied with swooping down upon us, mother and father sister and servant, bag and baggage and *dog*—they must take complete possession, fairly turn us out of our own house, spoil



our plans, change our old habits and reduce us to the merest nonentities. When I appeal to brother he says, "Hush! hush! It will all be right as soon as things get settled." When I speak to that chit, whom I have tried my best to like, but can't, she refers me to her *ma*. I haven't yet spoken to her *ma*. I'm afraid I can't control myself sufficiently to do it in a dignified way, the meddling, arrogant thing! But I will, and when I do I shall speak plainly. Poor, dear brother, not a mouth married and yet almost driven to distraction—I know he is—but the dear, meek, patient old lamb never complains with it at all.

*Enter BRIDGET, wearing French cap, and carrying a large old-fashioned soup tureen. Sees J.; sticks up her nose scornfully and marches defiantly towards C.)*

J. (*starting sternly*) Stop! (*Br. pays no attention.*)

J. Stop, I say! How dare you touch that? Take it right down stairs again as fast as you can go and put it carefully back where you found it.

BR. (*insolently*) Excuse me, *mum*! But not being me misthriss nor me masther, nor aiven me great *great* grandmother, as paiple moight think from the looks o' yez, I shant do nothin' of the soort!

J. (*indignantly*) How dare you speak to me in that manner? Do you know what you've got there? That belonged to my dear old great aunt, Mehitable Flush.

BR. (*insolently*) Oh! Indade! I didn't no befoor it had come out o' Noah's Ark.

J. It's the greatest treasure I've got in the house. I have kept it carefully for fifty years. I have never allowed it to be touched by anybody but myself, and I only use it on my brother's birthdays. And yet you have dared to take it from the cupboard. What in the world were you going to do with it?

BR. Histe it on the wall, with the rist of the owld brickbats.

J. (*resolutely*) Never. Between you all, you have robbed me of all the crockery I've got. The whole of the dear old dinner set we have used in the family since I was a girl has been scattered over the walls and ceilings of the house.

BR. And this is fur a cinter pase to some of 'em. Up she goes. Only I'm thinkin' they'll hev a high owld toime balancin' this owl soker wid their tacks and mucilige.

J. Will you obey me, or will you not ?

BR. I will not. "*Obey*" is it? That's purty language to me, the Frinch maid! Now I doant care nottin' abowt. this owld dish. I'm not purtikler about followin' the directions of me own misthriss, who asked me to go and git it—but whin it comes to yer "*obey*," and to yer hollerin' as if I was a naiger or a baithen Chinee, I'd carry this here owld flower-pot through fire and wather, and thunder and lightnin', and hail sthones and blue divils to spite yer. Take that, you owld banepole! *Obey*, is it? And to me!

J. (*aside*) I must control myself (*with assumed calmness*). Give that to me and I will take it down (*starts for it*).

BR. No, I won't—

J. (*fiercely*) Give it to me this moment. (*Lays hold of it with one hand and seizes Bridget's arm with other*).

BR. (*relinquishing her hold and breaking loose—then arms akimbo*) Oh, that's it, is it! All right! All right! Jist wait till I go an put on me thick soled shoes and thin look out fur yer owld quill shins (*exit R. defiantly*).

J. (*placing tureen carefully on table and examining it critically; then to C. and calls off excitedly*) Brother! Brother! Brother Nicholas!

Mrs. S. (*without L.*) He can't come now, Miss Flush, he's up on top of the step-ladder helping us to nail up a row of butter plates—

J. (*coming down L. C.*) On top of the step-ladder when he can hardly stand upon the floor! He'll fall and break his neck to a certainty, and then I suppose they will be satisfied. Oh, poor brother! poor brother! to what have you fallen—your old life blighted, the few years you have left darkened, and all hopes of a happy, quiet eventide dead and gone forever, and the only comfort I have in it all is, that I can say with truth "I told you so." Its pretty poor comfort, but it is always some balm to woman's heart to be able to lay those four little words upon its wounds—

*Enter Mr. FLUSH C. limping and rubbing his back ruefully coming down L. C., sits.*

Mr. FL. Ah! Jane—my back—my back—my back! It seems as if it must be broken this time; but I've done a pretty good morning's work; eighteen tea saucers; one dozen butter plates; four vegetable dishes and our old slop jar, have I nailed and stuck and tied to the parlor walls and ceiling since breakfast! pretty well for a man of eighty three, eh? Jane, didn't you call me? what do you want?

J. (*firmly*) Brother, I want to know this. Have I any place left in this house? Have I any voice here? Have I any rights here?

Mr. FL. (*looking about nervously*) Hush! hush! Jane dear, of course you have and always will have, and all will come right as soon as things get settled.

J. Yes, that's what you always say, and I think things are pretty well settled now. It is settled that all the quiet and comfort and happiness are to go out of our lives. It is settled that the rules of our house are to be broken and our habits turned upside down. It is settled that Mrs. Short is to be head and you and I to be foot.

Mr. FL. Don't speak quite so loud, Jane.

J. Just look at the house, just look at the furniture! The old bureau out of the spare chamber, in the dining room—the old black dining table with its ugly claws and two kitchen chairs, in the parlor—what belongs on the floor put on the ceiling, what was made for the table put on the wall. That's housekeeping!

Mr. FL. No, Jane; it's art. It does seem funny to us old folks, but I suppose it's because we never studied it. You know, Jane, you and I are behind the age and mustn't set ourselves up for judges.

J. Well, I nearly got my death by it last night, and I almost wish I had.

Mr. FL. Why, how was that—you didn't tell me anything about it?

J. No. You'd gone out to *dinner* with your—your bride, and didn't get home until *midnight*, how could I? I went into the hall to get my shawl, which Mrs. Short had kindly

worn around the house all day without leave or license, and had thrown on the hat-stand when she went out. And the gas hadn't been lighted, and I came right up against something standing just in the middle of the hall. I put out my hand and caught hold, as I thought, of somebody's hair. I thought of course of robbers, and I screamed "Fire! fire!" at the top of my voice, and almost fainted away; but I held on to the hair all the time with all my might. Mr. Short, who seems the best of the whole bad lot, came out, lit a match and showed me what it was—*mother's spinning wheel*, that hasn't been out of the garret since we were children—and I had hold of some flax they had tied on the distaff. I could have cried I was so frightened and angry and ashamed. I should just as soon have thought of bringing the old buggy out of the carriage house and standing it there, exactly. And now, now the climax is reached—I have just caught their French maid, whose name is Bridget, but whom they call "Mahree," carrying off grand aunt's soup tureen. Grand aunt's soup tureen—just think of it! And when I spoke to her she became very insolent.

Mr. FL. That was a little vexatious, but don't make any disturbance about it. I'll ask Mrs. Short to forego the pleasure of having it hung, or whatever they call it. I'll get her something else.

J. I can forgive everything of that kind. All they do to the house that I have kept in such order for half a century, even the attempt to desecrate my soup-tureen, now that I have got it back safely, but I can't forgive their making you unhappy and miserable, as I know they are making you, although you try to hide it from me. "

Mr. FL. (*with assumed cheerfulness*) No, no, Jane, you are mistaken—I am happy, very, very happy. That is, I would be, if Edith and you and I were living alone together here in our old peaceful fashion as I hoped we would. But since her family have chosen to come here we must make the best of it, Jane. We mustn't be wanting in hospitality, or do anything to hurt Edith's feelings, or say anything to offend Mrs. Short. For my impression is, Jane, but it's only an impression, that Mrs. Short's temper is perhaps a little hasty.

*Enter LEWIN GREENE C., carrying MIGNONETTE.*

GR. Excuse me, Mr. Flush and Miss Flush; I mean Miss Flush and Mr. Flush; ma says I must always speak to the lady first; Elsie says I must stay in here, for Mignonette's nose runs, and she's afraid the noise of the hammering is making his head ache. I say, would you or your sister mind holding him for a moment, while I work my arm; it feels awfully funny. I haven't had a chance to put him down since bath-time.

Mr. FL. (*kindly*) Oh! yes; give him to me (*Gr. does so, and then exercises his arm*).

GR. Thank you. You are a very nice old man, and I don't see anything the matter with you at all. Of course I was down on you a little for cutting me out with Edie just after I'd learned to keep step with her; but I forgave you that, and I didn't see but what you acted all right about it. But you never can tell——

J. What *is* this boy chattering about?

Mr. FL. Hush, Jane; maybe I've done something to offend them. Maybe I've made some blunder from not knowing the ways of the world now-a-days. I sometimes think I have. I sometimes fancy I see a difference in Edith and her mother. Iv'e tried to be very careful.

*Enter ELSIE C., sees Gr. exercising; looks hurriedly around; sees MIGNONETTE in Mr. F.'s lap; rushes up and snatches him rudely, and speaks very angrily.*

ELSIE. You horrid old man, you; don't you ever dare to touch my dog again. I don't allow anybody to do it. It's a nice state of affairs if everything we've got has to be handled and meddled with, and we can't have anything of our own, or do anything we please.

Mr. FL. Oh! my dear. I——

ELSIE. I don't want to hear you talk about it. And, Lewin, if you ever dare to let Mignonette out of your arms again I'll slap you right in the face and never speak to you again, never—never—never! (*Throws herself on sofa, panting and angry.*)

*Enter BRIDGET L. (sewling fiercely).*

BR. Where is she? Where is the owld number foive darnin' naidle? Oh! there ye are. Are you riddy?

MR. FL. (*soothingly*) There, there, my good girl; it's all right. We've settled the whole matter. You were not to blame at all; so don't say anything more about it.

BR. (*sneeringly*) Oh—is—*your* dry lung a workin' now? And am I to be towld what to do by another owld bone and grizzle? I won't shtand it; do yer hear (*very loud*)? I won't shtand it!

MR. FL. Well, well; I have—I haven't said anything to hurt your feelings. Please don't raise your voice; I'll see that it's all right with Mrs. Short.

BR. Whose raisin' her vice? (*raising it louder*) Whose raisin' her vice? Taichin me manners, is it? Why, I got moore braidin in one lash of me lift eye than you two owld, dry shkinny shtalks hev in the two of yer crops put together (*raises her voice*) putt together!

ELSIE. Lewin, go tell ma to come here.

MR. FL. (*hurriedly*) No, no; now, please don't do anything of the sort. Don't disturb her; I don't mind it at all. It amuses me, and I rather like it—he! he!

ELSIE (*rising and stamping her foot, paying no attention to Mr. Fl.*) Did you hear me speak, Lewin? Go and tell ma to come here! It's a great thing if even poor Mahree has to be scolded and found fault with all the time. (*Exit Greene c.*)

MR. FL. (*much agitated*) Oh! dear, oh! dear; my head is getting confused and excited.

BR. (*talking at him*) I'll foind out who's to be mistriss here, me or you. Yer same to think I'm a grane mummy from Agypt instead of a Frinch maid out of owld Airin herself.

*Enter Mrs. S. hurriedly c. followed by GREENE.*

MRS. S. (*looking from one to other*) What's this? What's the trouble? Speak, Elsie!

ELSIE. (*loud and excited*) It's some trouble and fault found with Mahree about that old soup tureen we sent after. They both stopped her, I understand, and commenced to abuse her violently, for daring to do anything without first consulting *them*.

BR. (*speaking loudly and breaking in on first part of above lines and speaking with ELSIE*) She was goin' to foight me over it—till I wint and put me thick soled shoes on and thin she backed down, like a white livered coward as she is.

Mrs. S. (*confused, turning to FL.*) Mr. Flush, I appeal to you, sir; to tell me what this all means.

Mr. FL. (*worried and nervous—soothingly*) I don't think it amounts to anything, my dear madam. It all arose out of a wish expressed by sister Jane here to your maid that she would not take the souptureen away. Of course you did not know it, but it is a family relic that Jane has always prized very dearly.

Mrs. S. (*impatiently*) That will do, sir; I understand it now just as well as if I had been here and heard every word. My maid has been abused for trying to carry out my orders.

Mr. FL. No—no—I am very sure not abused. Jane simply said to her, she tells me——

BR. (*hotly*) Yer lie—yer lie! She said to me, sez she, “don't yer go robbin' me”—that's it, “*robbin'* me of ivery-thing,” “You've shtole,” that's what she sid, and I doan't care if it was the sicond cousin of the great grandfather of the cook to the Quane herself as sid it—I won't shtandt it—I won't shtandt it.

Mrs. S. Well, Mahree, I don't blame you at all. You have acted perfectly right—nobly. You may withdraw now, if you please, but remain within call. I will settle this diffi culty myself.

BR. All right, mum. (*Aside.*) Ould vinaigre cruet. She'll pippin 'em, ef I aint mishtaken. (*Exit c. slowly.*)

Mrs. S. Mr. Flush, you have come to my house—I mean we have come to your house—to help our daughter and yourself to be happy. We have given up the pleasures of our own home, and all its peace, and love, and unity, which you admired yourself, and come here for your sake.

Mr. FL. Yes, yes, my dear madam; it was very kind of you all, and we appreciate it, I assure you; and we try to make it pleasant for you all.

Mrs. S. I find no fault with your treatment of us, Mr. Flush, personally, other than, I think, a hundred dollars a week



for pin-money, with your income, was rather a small allowance for Edith. And the promise that your will as drawn before marriage should be executed immediately after has not been fulfilled.

Mr. FL. (*quickly*) I hope you understand that matter, madam. It is not my fault. Fortew was to have had a copy prepared and has not yet brought it. So, at Mr. Short's suggestion, I went myself to see about it yesterday, and Mr. Fortew promised to bring it here to-day. I explained all this to Mr. Short, and he seemed quite satisfied.

Mrs. S. When you have finished, sir, I will continue what I have begun. I say, with the exceptions named, I have no fault to find with your treatment of us personally, but I cannot say as much for all the members of your household. I won't mention names, but from the first expression of a certain person's feelings and a paltry bed quilt as a wedding gift, to the present time, there has been a coldness, a hardness, a want of gush, and love, and confidence, which I little expected to find in a sister of my new made son. I don't mention names.

J. My dear madam, I cannot help it. I was greatly incensed at my brother's plan of marrying at his age. There was nothing personal in it. And I am trying hard to overcome all unpleasant feelings.

Mrs. S. When your sister has finished her interruption of my conversation with you, Mr. Flush, I will add, that looks, chilling manners, staring, watching, snooking and peering we could stand, but when it comes to active, hostile and continual interference with our every plan for your happiness, it is time matters were plainly and distinctly settled and defined.

J. You are mistaken, Mrs. Short, there has been no hostility on my part. I am desirous of doing everything to make your home here pleasant and happy, as my brother desires—only.

Mr. FL. Yes, yes! Jane does. She's old, Jane is, and set in her ways, but she's got a heart of gold, my dear madam, and I know you two will get along splendidly together when things are once settled.

Mrs. S. The other day I sent Mahree to bring down the marble top off the bureau in Miss Flush's room. I did not think it was at all worth while to trouble her by speaking with her first about it—we intended to make it into a shelf to put your curious old iron pots, sauce-pans and kettles from the kitchen on, and have it in the drawing-room—when Mahree was stopped and asked where she was going with it. Now, *that* I heard myself, there can be no *two sides* to that story—no intimation that Mahree was to blame—To-day more trouble—more interference. Surely the girl is not all to blame—even if she does speak out upon her part, which I wouldn't believe she ever does, having been introduced to me by Mrs. Livingstone DePeyster Van Cortlandt. It must be remembered that she is a foreigner, and that her hot southern blood flows more quickly than the cooler contents of veins grown in a temperate zone.

J. Well, my dear madam, if you only knew how I had treasured this old dish—that it's all I've got left of grand aunt's things that I've—

Mrs. S. (*entirely ignoring J.*) I say another instance of interference has occurred to-day, and I propose to make a test or an example of it, and to have you decide once for all whether this sort of thing is to continue or not.

Mr. FL. Oh ! well, my dear madam, do not let us take this matter seriously, I am sure nothing will again happen to vex Jane, and we both are very sorry for what has happened, and we beg your pardon if you desire it, and——

Mrs. S. It is not what has happened, Mr. Flush, it is the principle of the thing for the future. It might as well be decided first as last, here and now.

Mr. FL. Well, my dear madam, I would suggest that instead of using this, of which Jane is really very fond, I should buy you something—much handsomer—to take its place on the wall. How would a Chinese pagoda or a large hat-bath—painted up prettily, do. Anything that Edith or you would select. Never mind the expense.

Mrs. S. As I said before, sir, in this case I choose to make it a matter of principle and a final test. I insist, sir, that you decide between us—which of us shall have our own way as

to this particular thing. I say that dish shall go where I expected to put it. A person whom I will not name says it shall *not*.

J. But, my dear madam——

Mrs. S. My conversation is addressed to you, sir.

Mr. FL. Yes ; but, my dear madam, in this matter——

Mrs. S. In this matter, sir, there is nothing further to be said—not one word—except for you to decide which of the two ways of disposing of that paltry dish shall be followed.

Mr. FL. But, my dear madam, if you will only listen——

Mrs. S. I will listen to nothing, sir—except your answer—and be quick about it, too.

Mr. FL. (*nervously*) Oh, dear ! Oh, dear ! I don't like to say—my poor head is tired of it all. If I must—but I would rather not—I should say that sister, having had this old family relic so long, and it being her property, should be the one to say whether it should be used or not.

Mrs. S. (*angrily*) I knew it. He is against me, too. He takes her part in everything—no matter who's right. That's the end of it. I shan't try any more to keep the peace between us. You two have made your own bed now—you can lie in it.

Mr. FL. But, dear madam—now don't get excited—my only desire is that we may all be happy here together—that you——

Mrs. S. That I— That's right, be sarcastic and ironical. Turn me into ridicule—make a jest and butt of me—(*bursting into tears*). Taunt me, slight me, insult me, trample on me—tear me limb from limb—ah ! oh !—hum !—(*screams violently and prolonged*) Ah—h—h—h ! (*screams louder*) Ah—h—h !

ELSIE. (*hurriedly*) She's got one. Lewin, run and tell them to send up a pail of water quick, and I'll see if I can find pa. I thought you'd bring one on between you, you mean old things. (*Goes out c., calling "Pa ! Pa ! Pa !"*)

Mrs. S. (*screams*) Ah—h—h—h !

Mr. FL. Oh ! dear, oh ! dear, it goes right through my head. Oh ! dear, who could have supposed anybody would have a temper like this ?

J. I never did hear anything like this.

Mrs. S. What is she saying? Taunting me, insulting me to my face! (*screams*) Ah—h—h—Let me get at her; let me get at her old crockery! I'll show her who she's got to deal with!

(*Rushes to table, seizes tureen, raises it in both hands over her head as if to dash it to pieces. J. rushes to her.*)

J. Help! help! help! She'll break it.

GREENE enters C., runs to her and holds left arm. Mr. S. runs in with EDITH, FORTEW, ELSIE and BRIDGET; they gather around Mrs. S. Mr. S. lays hold of tureen.

Mrs. S. (*screams*) Ah—h—h—h—h!

Mr. S. Yes, she's got one. (*firmly*) Stop, Matilda, stop. Hurry up that water. Send up two pails, one hot!

Mrs. S. (*controlling herself somewhat*) No—no, Aristotle; not hot. I—I will try to behave. Where is Mahree. She isn't against me. Let her take me away, out of this room. I shall suffocate—choke—here. (*Br. comes to her, and Mrs. S puts arm about her neck; they exit slowly C.*)

Br. All right, my angel. (*Aside.*) Owd pickle pot!

Mr. FL. (*completely exhausted—throws himself back in chair*) Oh! dear—dear! Never have I passed through such an excitement as this. I'm as weak as I can be. My head aches and is all confused. Oh! dear. Oh! dear.

Mr. S. (*good naturedly*) Oh! That's nothing when you get used to it.

Mr. FL. Has she ever acted so before? She isn't subject to such paroxysms, is she?

Mr. S. No—I shouldn't say subject to them. She has them two or three times a week. Fortunately those she has had since she's been here, she's had up in our room.

Mr. FL. Oh! my poor brain. I really think another such excitement would kill me (*sees FORTEW who has taken seat at table and is looking over papers*) Ah! Fortew, I did not see you and Edie too. I haven't seen you, Edie, all the morning.

EDITH. No? You have managed to do pretty well without me. Worrying poor dear ma into one of her turns.

Mr. FL. Please don't turn against me, too, Edie. I have had worriment enough for one day. (*leans head on hand*)

*wearily ; J. stands by him and tries to soothe him by passing hand over hair, &c.,*

FORT. Mr. Flush, I have brought the Will at last. It was my fault entirely that you have not had it sooner, But we have been rushed at the office. Will you execute it now or shall I come in again ? *(rises with Will in hand and stands by FL.)*

Mr. FL. Yes—yes—now ! I will be glad to have it done with. Another day like this would make it too late. *(FORT. hurries himself at table)* Where do I sign ? Opposite the seal?

FORT. Yes.

Mr. FL. *(signs)* My hand trembles so I don't know whether it looks much like my signature or not.

FORT. I will sign as one witness and Mr. Greene the other. *(to GREENE)* You are of age, ain't you ?

GREENE *(startled)* Sir ?

FORT. You are of age—twenty-one ?

GREENE *(more frightened)* No, sir. Yes, sir—but I don't want to be mixed up in any law things.

FORT. Just be a witness here.

GREENE. I don't want to go say anything against this family *(goes reluctantly to table).*

FORT. All I want you to do is to sign your name here—take this pen ! *(puts pen in Gr's hand)* This is Mr. Flush's Will and he wants you to sign it. Do you not, Mr. Flush ?

Mr. FL. Yes, this is my Will and I want you to witness it.

FORT. *(pointing)* Sign your name and address there.

GREENE. *(at wrong place)* Here ?

FORT. *(impatiently)* No, there !

GREENE. *(again at wrong place)* There ?

FORT. *(fiercely)* No, there—there—there—where my finger is. I'd as lief have an idiot to deal with.

GREENE. *(signs laboriously)* Suppose ma's mad at my doing this ?

FORT. Refer her to me ! *(folding up Will and looking at Edith significantly)* There, the Will is signed, sealed and published. So that is over with *(has whispered conference aside with Edith and Mr. S.)* Yes, yes, I think you are right, now is a good time. *(standing by side of Edith, L.)* Having completed my services as your counsel in the matter of your Will, Mr. Flush, I

have now to announce to you that I appear as the attorney of this fair young person, your beloved wife. You must be well aware, sir, that you have reached that period of life when by common consent a man is incapable of properly taking care of himself or his property. An age, sir, when as everybody knows who has aged relatives with money, the mind has become unsound and the person *non compos*, or rather a *lunatic*, as the law now calls him. For our law, sir, gently gathers under this sweet word all varieties of mental disease, unsoundness and aberration, except the single one of idiocy, as the maternal goose gathers her downy goslings under her snowy quills.

MR. S. (*admiringly to EDITH*) That's beautiful language (*aloud*) Hear! Hear!

MR. FL. (*taking hands from head and listening with interest*) What do you mean by this Fortew? Are you talking about me and in earnest?

FORT. I said "you" and I said "your." Two words, short and easy of comprehension to a mind in its normal state, a brain not worn out or destroyed by the lapse of unnecessary years. To continue, my fair client, by her father as her next friend, and through me, as her attorney, has made an application to the court for an order that a commission should be issued *de lunatico inquirendo*.

MR. S. That's beautiful language!

FORT. The application was made the very day after your wedding. We did not press the matter, as we desired to have your Will first duly executed and in our possession. The order was obtained and entered. A commission has been duly issued and I here and now serve the party proceeded against with the papers (*handing voluminous papers to FL.*) that he may at once prepare himself for his defense by retaining competent counsel.

J. (*sinking into chair by FL's side*) This is the most extraordinary, the most dreadful, the most barbarous thing I ever heard of.

MR. FL. Hush, Jane! You do not read the papers daily or it would not seem so extraordinary to you, and we don't want any more scenes like that of to-day. So please be very

quiet and respectful. May I ask, sir, what I have done to lead any one, least of all my wife here, to think me unsound in mind? I have as carefully conducted all my business affairs as at any time in the past. I don't think I have made any serious mistakes in them. My memory is good. I could now give you an exact inventory of all my investments and assets. I have prided myself that while my body was feeble and weakened a little by sickness, my mind was as strong and lucid as ever in my prime. Still I may have done some strange things without knowing it. If so, I should like to know what they are.

FORT. (*coldly*) The affidavits attached to the Petition set forth all the facts in detail and I would suggest to the aged party that he should lose no time in placing the same in competent hands, that they may be properly explained to him. Appearing for his opponent it is not for me to give him information, but still I will say thus much, that the principal ground on which we rely for an adjudication is his recent marriage with my client. That he, a feeble old octogenarian, should propose marriage to a child of the tender years of this fair flower, is a most conviucing proof to her, as she alleges under oath, that the poor old superannuated party is—to put it mildly—mad.

J. (*exasperated*) Do you mean to say that his wife goes into court and asks to have him adjudged a lunatic, as you dare to call it, because he married her? Oh, this is simply monstrous, monstrous—unnatural; too horrible to think of—

MR. FL. There, there, Jane; don't add to this confusion. You see I am calm and—and—composed. I don't mind it. (*Bursts into tears and weeps silently ; J. weeps by side ; GREENE affected ; rest calm and unmoved.*)

FORT. I would once more suggest that the aged party proceeded against should at once retain counsel, and he need not think that I am unduly or unusually interested in this case because of the unwonted comeliness of my client. The beauty of woman falls upon the judicial mind like the soft dropping of the dew upon the everlasting adamant.

MR. S. Beautiful language! (*Applauds slightly.*)

MR. FL. (*sighing*) Well, Fortew, I suppose I shall retain you. I don't know anyone else to go to as respectable.



FORT. Let us step aside, then, a few moments. (*They retire up c. and consult.*)

Mr. S. (*to Edith*) His language reminds me a little of Uncle Aristotle's, and recalls to my mind an incident in his life. At a literary congress to which he belonged he began a sentence at a quarter before nine in the morning, and did not finish until ten minutes of three in the afternoon, and it was so beautifully constructed grammatically, that nobody knew when he got through it. One of the members who heard it made up his mind to parse it in six volumes, and publish them by subscription, but he only lived to complete three of them. I have them. (Mr. FL. and FORT. come down st.; FL. resumes seat and FORT. stands beside him.)

FORT. I am retained by my aged friend to act as his counsel in this matter. He has requested leave to ask of the other side two or three questions. (*Crosses to side of EDITH*) I am pleased to meet as my opposing counsel in this matter one in whose love of justice and desire to do right I have such implicit confidence. My fair client and her friends I am sure will gladly answer any questions that in the opinion of my learned friend are not unfair.

Mr. FL. Edith, when were these proceedings first suggested?

EDITH. (*calmly*) I think the evening you proposed to me—after you had gone home.

Mr. FL. (*leaning forward eagerly*) Who first suggested them?

EDITH. Ma!

Mr. FL. (*greatly relieved*). Thank heaven! Have they now your full sanction?

EDITH. They have.

Mr. FL. Why do you desire it?

EDITH. Because it is right and just that it should be done. You have made your Will leaving everything to me, and I can't have my property risked and jeopardized by being under the control of a person of your great age. It would be injustice to me and to Pa who has had to pay for my schooling and to Ma, who weaned me and trotted me so much in childhood's hour. Both of whom now feel that a comfortable home has been provided for them for the rest of their lives.

Mr. FL. I would like to ask a question or two of Mrs. Short, who is not here.

Mr. S. Elsie call your mother in if she can behave herself !

[*Exit* ELSIE C, FORT and FL. confer apart. *Enter* Mrs. S., supported by ELSIE and followed by BRIDGET. Mrs. S., catching sight of tureen still on table, screams and rolls her eyes viciously.]

Mr. S. If you want to have any peace and quiet, you'll have to take that thing away and put it out of sight. (JANE takes tureen and hurries out L with it.)

FORT. Mrs. Short will you kindly be seated; my respected client Mr. Flush, for whom at this moment I am speaking, desires to put a question or two to you, which (*crosses to* EDITH) I, as representing your dear daughter, advise you that you may answer without danger of compromising our interests.

Mrs. S. ( *ruefully*) Well, sir ; I will answer if I can control myself. Mahree, hand me my salts—

Mr. FL. Mrs. Short, three months ago you gave me your full and free consent to marry your daughter ? (*reenter* J., taking same place as before beside FL.)

Mrs. S. Of course ; you know I did.

Mr. FL. Mr. Fortew tells me you have sworn in an affidavit among these papers that you have known me as a neighbor for a long time, and that, of your own knowledge, I have been of unsound mind for more than two years. Is this true ?

Mrs. S. Of course it is. You are 85.

Mr. FL. I am satisfied ; go on Fortew.

FORT. My aged client requests me to say in his behalf that while perfectly certain that these proceedings are entirely unnecessary and uncalled for, and while feeling hurt that the same should have been instituted, he is unwilling that any scandal should be caused by them or publicity given to them. He desires me to say that he will not oppose the proceedings as instituted, but will, so far as possible, under the practice, consent to a formal adjudication, and the appointment of his

wife as committee of both his person and estate. That he will retire to the peaceful little institution for the mentally afflicted, founded and conducted by his old friend, Dr. Leopold Haarbauer, where the use of the electrified bolster has been introduced. He feels, he tells me, that he has at most but a few years to live and would rather, I have no doubt, spend those years in a lunatic asylum than in the uninterrupted society of his respected mother-in-law—for, Mr. Flush, like the rest of us, is human—

Mr. S. (*to Edith*) Beautiful language !

FORT. (*crossing to Edith, whispers*) : My fair client perceives with pleasure that the spirit of concession and compromise is to pervade these proceedings, and on her part she will heartily reciprocate. She desires me to say she is not actuated by any personal dislike to her feeble partner. She will see that every moderate comfort consistent with the strictest economy is afforded him. Of course, he cannot expect to be indulged in luxuries or to have any particular consideration shown him, for he is well aware that he is one of those unfortunate individuals who have outlived their use and usefulness.

Mr. FL. I shall only have one request to make when the time comes, and that is as to dear Jane, here—I want her, Edith to have every comfort and every luxury—I want her to have every wish gratified as long as I shall live, as well as after my decease, as provided for then in my will.

J. (*Greatly affected.*) Nicholas, I can never be separated from you. We have lived together under the same roof seventy-eight years, boy and girl, man and woman, sister and brother, and do you think I could let you leave me, or that I could leave you? No, brother dear, if you are a *lunatic* as they call it, so am I, and I really begin to believe we both are, when I hear and see such things as I have heard and seen this day, in this house. I feel that if the rest of the world of to-day be sane, we old folks are as mad as March hares!

## ACT III.

SCENE.—*Same as Act II ; Some modern furniture introduced.  
Edith and Mr. S. discovered.*

MR. S. Why, of course, we expected they'd go up—but instead, they've gone down—to nothing—to worse than nothing, for they're not worth a cent, and there's an assessment on each share to pay.

EDITH. Why, what happened to them?

MR. S. Oh! some fellow made a Pad better than Haarbauer's—no better perhaps, as an Electric Pad, but one you can use for a money belt, a valise, a camp-stool, a hammock, a bed quilt, a dressing gown and a life preserver, and it all sells for the same price as the doctor's.

EDITH. Well, why don't the doctor improve on that?

MR. S. He's a queer fellow, *Haarbauer* is; always got some new hobby. Now he's getting up an explosive pill—to be swallowed while attached to a delicate electric wire, and fired off in the stomach—for headache. It will be some time yet before he can start a company. There'll be one prejudice against it from the first, to swallow anything with a long hair like attachment must inevitably recall the boarding-house dinner of experience, and of the two most people would prefer the headache. Well, the fact remains that we've put a deal of the old man's money where we'll never see it again.

EDITH (*seriously*). Well, Pa, I don't understand why if the stock of the Electric Pad Company has been worthless a month, as you say, you haven't sold it out to some of your friends, and let them bear the loss. It isn't like you not to have done it.

MR. S. Why, my dear, I did. I stuck all the friends I could just as soon as I found out where it was going; but you can't go on doing that sort of thing forever where you have an unlimited amount of stock and a limited circle of friends. Your friends give out before the stock does.

EDITH. Well, I'm very, *very* sorry that we sold out those Government Bonds that we got from the Safe Deposit Com-

pany at all. For they were pretty at any rate. Yet it seemed to sound business like when we talked it over. Sell the Bonds and buy Electric Pad Stock ; if we made anything, keep that ourselves ; if we lost anything put that down to the old man's estate on my account as his committee. Then when we get through buy back the bonds again. It sounded fair and just, like what I had read about in the papers that banks and companies were doing ; and now the money is *all* gone, and we have nothing left to buy back the bonds with. What shall I put down on my account ?

MR. S. (*cheerfully*). Nothing. It's all simple enough Edie. It don't give me a moment's uneasiness. We've got his Will ; everything left to you.

EDITH. Yes, I know that.

MR. S. Well, he's very low, may die at any moment ; up at Haarbauer's asylum, where he has stayed constantly for ten months, he and his sister will know nothing about it, and when he's gone it will all be yours, and then no one will ever know anything about it except you and me, Edie and her Pa. It don't trouble me a bit. (*sings*) Tra-la-la-lum, tra-la-la-lum, la-lum-la-lum !

EDITH (*thoughtfully*). Then when he dies I am the only one who could ever make a claim for those moneys ?

MR. S. That's it. Ha, ha ! Don't you see ; we're safe enough.

EDITH (*thoughtfully*). How much does the loss amount to ?

MR. S. About \$75,000. Here, I've got a little memorandum of the exact amount (*feels in pocket*). No ; I've left it in my other coat ; shall I get it ?

EDITH. Yes, please.

MR. S. I wish we had a friend now, say just come home from Europe, and knew nothing about the company—some one who had perfect confidence in me—I'd just like to unload on him the rest of that stock ; we could get half our—that is—your, I mean—the old man's money back (*exit R.*).

EDITH. Oh, dear ! I wish there was no such thing as losing money or spending money, only getting it and keeping it, and knowing that you had more of it than your neighbors. That's the charm it has for me.

(Enter ELSIE C., slowly, pale and weeping ; throws herself down by Edith's side and buries her face in her lap and sobs convulsively.)

EDITH. There, there, Elsie ; you'll make yourself sick crying so much and eating nothing. It's four days now since you've been like yourself at all.

ELSIE (*raising her head and looking sorrowfully*). Four days since he died, and almost one since we laid him in the tomb. Oh, my love, my love ! Edie, I want to thank you for letting us have the funeral here yesterday.

EDITH. Oh, you are welcome.

ELSIE. It was a great comfort to me to have it and to see so many of his little friends attend it, and Mr. Namm was so kind to come and officiate, and he spoke so beautifully ; and when the poetry came at the end of his remarks, as it's sure to come, I thought I should go into convulsions, and that poor little black-and-tan of the Woolwiddies seemed almost as much affected as I was ; he had to walk out into the hall to control himself. Mr. Namm sent me a copy of the verses this morning ; I almost know them by heart (*looks off dreamily and recites mournfully*).

“ Oh, voice of weeping, shrill, *shrill !*

Oh, cup of sorrow, fill, *fill ;*

Oh, bitter waters, spill, *spill,*

For his little tail is still, *still !* ”

EDITH. That sounds just like him.

ELSIE. Oh, my breaking heart ! Everything reminds me of him. Mr. Namm's moustaches have always had a great influence over me, but they now only recall those of my lost darling. In every other I see his shadow ; when Ma speaks I hear his snarl, and when I see Lewin with his empty arms and unoccupied time, there comes afresh the words of doom “ Mignonette is dead.” (*weeps convulsively*.)

*Enter BRIDGET, L.*

BR. Say, Miss Elsie, the dress-maker wants to try your mournin' waist on, now its baisted.

ELSIE. (*rising and drying her eyes*) It is the only solace for a heart really broken—new clothes and the excitement of trying them on.

*Exeunt ELSIE and BR., L., enter GREENE R. C.*

GR. Where's poor Elsie—

EDITH. Just this moment left me to seek consolation in the sewing room.

GR. (*anxiously*) Oh, Edie, do you think she'll really die of a broken heart? she says she bets she will—I asked Ma—

EDITH. Well—

GR. She didn't give me any particular satisfaction—

EDITH. What did she say?

GR. Well, she only said “fiddle de dee” which might mean almost anything; I've got so I can keep step with Elsie when she isn't tied back, and if she should go and die of a broken heart (*weeps*) who is there left in this family for me?

EDITH. Elsie is very much broken down and if she don't eat anything for a week or more, she may be carried off by a broken heart.

GR. Oh! isn't there anything will save her?

EDITH. I think there is—I know Elsie pretty well—supply the old love with a new—get her another dog.

GR. I never thought of that—I'll do it if I can; Ma's getting awful generous, she gave me a dollar this morning on my only asking twice. I was in hopes when Mignonette died, that maybe I could take his place, in time.

EDITH. (*kindly*) I hardly think so. Lewin. There is a natural brightness and intelligence about a dog, that the young man of the period does not possess. I have read somewhere that a dog is *never* born without a brain; well now, I know myself ever so many young men, older than you are; brighter than you are, who were born without a speck.

GR. (*pleased*) you talk just like an own sister to me, Edie; I always like to listen to you; you always make me feel as if I amounted to something, now Ma never pays me a compliment and I like them—every fellow does—well, I guess I'll go and see what I can do, and you needn't let Elsie know I've been here.

*Exit c., enter Mr. S., R., with paper in hand.*

MR. S. There Edie, that's the account (*hands it to her.*)

EDITH. (*looking it over*) Is that all in your handwriting, Pa?

MR. S. (*surprised*) Yes—why?



EDITH. Nothing—" \$76,323.21." That's a good deal of money to lose.

MR. S. I know, but it's virtually your own.

EDITH. That's what makes me feel the loss to be heavy.

MR. S. You don't seem to understand.

EDITH. Yes, I do.

MR. S. The old man may die any moment now—they say he's very low—no one allowed to see him. I'd have gone there to-day to inquire if I hadn't expected to go fishing; but he don't want to have any body even to inquire about him but you.

EDITH. (*coldly*) I went up last month and stayed nearly a quarter of an hour. He can't expect me to spend all my time there. I shall go up again when I finish the novel I'm reading—if I ever do—it's horribly dull.

MR. S. I don't suppose really he would have lasted any longer if we had let him alone, and taken no proceedings. One or two of your Ma's tantrums would have finished him. The one she had day before yesterday for instance, when she pulled off the table-cloth and danced on the dessert. Still, speaking of your Ma, I think she's improving. When we were first married I used to calculate 25 per cent. of my income to pay her breakage—this year it's been a mere trifle—to be sure it's been mostly among other people's things, so it don't count to me—still I think I can see an improvement.

(*Enter BRIDGET, L.*)

BR. Misther Short—Miss Elsie wants yer to come up shtairs quick with some wather. She can't do nothin wid her Ma. The ould woman's got the driss-maker down and is a settin on top of her scraimin' loike mad.

MR. S. What's happened?

BR. Oh—she wants thray moore buttons on her mournin' than the pattern calls for. (*S. hurries out L.*)

EDITH. Why Mahree, you look tired?

BR. I'm that tired I could drop—I towld the waitriss I'd mind the front door while she wint to look at shwitches for her hid—and I've hed to go oncet alriddy. (*Exit slowly R.; HAARBAUER enters C, and comes down.*)

Dr. HAARBAUER. How you vas Mrs. Flush? Is your vater and mutter at home?

EDITH. Yes, doctor—any news?

Dr. H. (*seriously*) Pardon me, madam—but will you be so goot as to hev here mit you your parents. I hev an errant.

EDITH. (*rising*) I'll call pa—ma is not feeling very well.

(*Exit R.*)

Dr. H. Poor young ting. It es cruel, dot's vot it is. I vish dey hev some one else—to hev to say your husband ess gone. I hef not die heart ven die voman ess pretty. She look sheerful, but I know die vomen. Dey keep up mit a shmile till come die blow, und denn collpose mit a *pop*—faint, cry, shriek, pull die hair, tear die clothes. Oh! I hev see dem und I vish it vere vell over.

(*Enter Mr. S. drying his hands with handkerchief followed by EDITH.*)

Mr. S. Ah, doctor. How-d'ye-do. Mrs. S. will be 'down in a few minutes. She's changing her clothes—got wet accidentally a moment ago. What's the news? How's our old friend?

Dr. H. (*very solemnly*) He hes—left us——

EDITH. (*brightly*) Gone at last, eh?

Dr. H. (*solemnly*) Gone—at last.

EDITH. Well, Pa, you see I was right in having the mourning under way a week ago——

Mr. S. Yes, yes, you were quite right.

EDITH. We will have to bestir ourselves. There are a great many things I want done *right away*. Pa, you get word to Mr. Fortew to have whatever is necessary to be done about proving the Will attended to at once—not wait for anything. And I want him to get us rid of all this "Committee." "Committee," nonsense! I'm in a hurry to write my own name to checks and things, and to feel that *everything* is really mine—mine—mine!

Dr. H. (*listening and regarding with wonder*) Vell, my gracious. Vot a hett dot iss for pisniss.

Mr. S. Well, I'll see Fortew at once.

(*Exit, c.*)

EDITH. Now, I hope, doctor, you are not going to send

me in some enormous bill for my husband's board, or for his sister's. They say times are very hard; and you must not forget that three or four times we have sent up ice cream to them when we had more for dessert than we could eat—I shall want all that credited.

Dr. H. You vill not hef to tremble at my bills. (*Aside.*) Vot a hett! I must tink about her sister. My gracious!

EDITH. And, doctor, if you can dispose of his clothes among the patients I should be glad—at fair prices.

Dr. H. I vill do all I can to make die sorrow in your heart lighter to bear; I am your shlave.

EDITH. Would you take any more shares in your Electric Pad Company—to oblige,—me—(*looking at him archly*).

Dr. H. (*bounding up*) No—my gracious. Day hef made me already troubles enough. Vy do you ask?

EDITH. Pa's got some we'd like to dispose of—if you would——

Dr. H. Hes he no intimate frients?

EDITH. None that are without some of the stock he had.

*Enter BRIDGET, c. slowly and wearily.*

BR. Note for Mrs. Flush (*hands same to EDITH*). I wish that gurl would get home. I'm tired out completely—this is the second toime I've been.

EDITH. (*amused with reading (reads)*) “Dear Madam: Allow me in the midst of your deep affliction to call your attention to my new Stereoscopic Burial Casket, combining beautiful optical effects with simplicity of construction, well seasoned material and *cheapness*. Dr. Leopold Haarbauer endorses them. Respectfully, Hiram Shrowder.” What is it, doctor?

Dr. H. You vant von not. Day is goot for dose who vish to make show of die carcase. Die casket in die edge of die lid hef many pair of glass like die stereoscope, und die parties marching round look droo. It brings out die features und die embroidery goot enuff—but some fellow hef a later patent mit improvements—I forget his name. He hef die glasses, und schmall vires und a crank, und you look droo—und turn die crank, und it schmile, und vinks, und nod its hett, goot enuff. But I like not dese tings. Ven you hef ted—bury you ted; ven you vish shows, buy a menagerie.

EDITH. Yes, but doctor he says it combines *cheapness* with the optical effects.

Dr. H. Dey cost more dann die odders.

EDITH. Then we certainly *don't want one*.

*Enter Mr. S. FORT. followed by Mrs. S., who appears to be subdued, and ELSIE.*

EDITH. Mr. Fortew, I suppose Pa has told you what I wanted you to do ?

FOOT. Yes ; he met me on my way here. The fact is I am placed in a somewhat peculiar position. I am unexpectedly retained this morning by—you can't guess who ?

Dr. H. I can guess who not ; it wasn't me—my gracious—never again.

FOOT. Miss Jane Flush.

EDITH. (*excitedly*) Miss Jane Flush—what for ?

FOOT. To prevent you from proving the Will of her late deceased brother, on the ground that the same is null, void and of no effect.

Dr. H. Anoder vill gone ; my gracious !

EDITH. (*excitedly*) Why that is ridiculous ; you drew it.

Mr. S. (*excitedly*) And Mr. Flush signed it ; I saw him and heard him declare it to be *his Will*.

ELSIE. (*lugubriously*) And Lewin witnessed it ; I saw him, and held my lost darling while (*bursts into tears*).

FOOT. Notwithstanding all that, speaking as the counsel for my aged and esteemed client, sister of the deceased, I am compelled to say that the Will so drawn, so executed and so witnessed is null and void, not worth the paper it is written upon.

Dr. H. Dat is die beauty uv a two-sided lawyer ; never vill I hef vun in my pisniss again.

EDITH. Well ; tell us what you mean. How is the Will made void ? (*impatiently*) Don't be so slow ; be explicit !

FOOT. (*calmly and with deliberation*) Acting in the interest of Miss Flush, an opposing party, it would not be professional in me to explain our position—to use a figure drawn from a very respectable calling, to show our hand before the lead be made. I should advise the parties concerned to re-

tain competent counsel and in that way obtain what information they require.

MR. S. Well, Edie, I suppose we had better.

EDITH *rises and calls Fortew aside and holds whispered conversation with him, then returns and takes her seat.*

FORT. Being retained by this fair young widow, whose pale cheek and tearful eyes should melt the heart of everlasting adamant —

MR. S. *(to Edith)* Beautiful language !

FORT. I hasten to explain what my learned friend on the other side, out of feelings of professional etiquette, had to decline to elucidate. You will all remember that we applied for an order that a commission should issue in lunacy before the Will in question was executed; that after its execution we obtained without opposition an adjudication in the lunacy proceedings. The Will then was executed *pending* the proceedings. You follow me?

EDITH. That's plain enough.

FORT. Now, our Appellate Court has recently decided that the adjudication in lunacy relates back to the commencement of the proceedings, and that every act done by the lunatic, *after* such commencement, is null, void and of no effect. You follow me?

MR. S. *(disgusted)* You should have known this. It was your business to see that no such blunder was made. You charged for it, and got paid for it—handsomely, too.

FORT. At the time this occurred our Appellate Court held just the *other* way, so far as any testamentary acts pending adjudication were concerned.

MR. H. Peautiful tings dese dree—die law—die court—die lawyer. Here come the vizard mit some monish. Now he say, my friend, you see it, and now—you don't. Where is it ? in de law ? No. In die court ? No. Ah—so it is—in the pocket of die lawyer.

EDITH. This is dreadful—all that will be left for me will be a *share* in the estate, as if no will had been made. Well, that is something. I shan't be without consolation.

FORT. *(stepping to other side of table)* I am now speaking as

the attorney for the aged maiden, Miss Flush, again. She is very much incensed, she says, at the conduct of certain parties in connection with the estate of her deceased brother. She has gone so far as to call these parties adventurers. She has instructed me to take immediate steps to compel the Committee of the deceased lunatic to account for all the property which has come into her possession. She has informed me that large sums have been wasted, and large amounts lost in hazardous investments sufficient in the aggregate to offset any share to which the Committee, as widow, would be entitled under the Statute. I would like to hear from my learned friend on the other side upon the subject (*crosses to EDITH*). I can only say to my learned brother who has expressed a wish that he should hear from me on the subject of a proposed accounting by the Committee of the person and estate of the deceased that I have not yet been retained in the same, that it is an entirely distinct matter from that of the Will in which I appear, and unless specially retained, I——

EDITH. (*impatiently*) I retain you—I retain you—tell us what to do.

FORT. As your counsel in those proceedings also, I should certainly advise you to compromise if possible, and I will confer with my learned friend.

DR. H. Ah! I tout it was time to hear about some compromises, my gracious.

EDITH. It seems to me the outlook is desperate. I will take the reins into my own hands and save every dollar that I can. Here, Mr. Fortew, I retain you also to take immediate proceedings to collect for me the sum of \$76,323.21 from my dear Pa, here, being for moneys intrusted to him to invest safely, and lost by him as I shall claim in a careless and negligent manner by being put into the stock of the Electric Pad Company, which is now worthless. There is the account (*handing it to FORT.*). I have taken the precaution to obtain an admission from Pa that it is in his own handwriting. I would attach his bank account and any property of his you can find.

MR. S. (*astonished*) Goodness gracious, Edie, you don't mean this. Why, you are my favorite daughter. No partiality you know, but you and I have always, somehow, been peculiarly attached to one another, and——

EDITH. That is all true Pa, and I love you as much now as I ever did. But this is a crisis for me, and I have to act accordingly. I have often heard you say you never allowed feeling to stand in the way of business, and my first duty, as you have always shown me by your precept and example, is to myself.

Mr. S. (*amazed*) Well, I never expected to have Edie—turn on me. Well, I'll have to fight it. Do you think I am liable, Fortew, when she *knew* what I was doing, and——

FORT. (*with dignity*) Pardon me, sir. I do not have the pleasure of representing *you* in this matter. I should advise you to retain competent counsel without delay.

Mr. S. Oh! confound it. Come here (*walks off L. and holds whispered conference with FORT.*).

Dr. H. I should tink dot man get so mixed up mit his retainers und his parties und his learned frients that he would be crazy, my gracious.

Mr. S. (*coming down worried to Mrs. S.*) Matilda, you've got a pretty clear head for business. What do you advise?

Mrs. S. (*looking up with feigned surprise*) Me! oh, nothing. I am nobody, a cipher. I ventured to make a simple suggestion once about it and was snapped at and insulted and abused for it. I gently suggested that Elsie was best fitted for the position of wife to this dead old man, but I was silenced. Edith must do it. She was the eldest, and the favorite, and now you see—just as I told you. I foresaw it all all these blunders. I could have named them beforehand. I knew Edith would make them, for she takes after her Pa. Elsie would never have made a mistake of this kind, would you, my dear?

ELSIE. (*who has been buried in grief looks up sadly*) Oh! don't speak to me, Ma. What do I care what I would or would not have done. My heart is broken.

Mrs. S. I wash my hands of all responsibility in this matter—you two have got us into the trouble, and I expect you two to get us out. (*Exit, loftily, c.*)

EDITH. It seems like some dreadful dream. For nearly a whole year I have had control of so much money, which I felt was and treated as my own, and it has unfitted me for



any other life. And to be left with only what I can get out of Pa, off the \$76,000 ! If I get hold of everything he's got, I don't believe it will pay twenty per cent. of it.

Dr. H. Vell, you will hef to dry again. Another marriage.

EDITH. Yes. I have thought of that myself.

*Enter BRIDGET, C., with flowers and letter.*

BR. Nosegay and note for Mrs. Flush (*giving them*). I wonder if that gurl ain't niver comin' back. That makes thray toimes, and I'm almost did. (*Exit, C., wearily.*)

EDITH. (*putting flowers on table*) This is almost the worst of it. Flowers and condolences, mourning and funeral all to be gone through with ; and we expected to be just as much affected, to the naked eye, as if we cared, or the Will was to stand, or I was to have all I have hoped for, worked for, and earned. (*Opens letter indifferently, then reads same eagerly, and with apparent excitement calls S. aside and holds whispered conference ; he seems delighted.*) Dr. Haarbauer, I wish to see you a moment. Mr. Fortew, I am sure, will excuse me if I ask him please to step into the other room for a moment.

FORT. With pleasure, my dear madam. It will give me an opportunity of entering up on my memorandum book just exactly what parties I represent. (*Exit.*)

EDITH. Elsie, dear, would you mind ?

ELSIE. (*going solemnly*) All places are equally gloomy and desolate to me, now. The only one more inviting than the other is the tomb. (*Exit, C., slowly.*)

Mr. S. Well, this is the most extraordinary thing—read the letter, Edie, aloud.

EDITH. I knew the handwriting. (*Reads.*) “My darling wife ; one year ago to-day I asked you to be mine.” So it is just a year, I had forgotten the date. “I cannot let the anniversary go by without showing you that it is a pleasant memory to me. Accept these flowers as token—and now to business. I have caused a false report of my sickness and death to reach you. With sister's aid I have imposed a little on old friend Fortew in order that I might show you in what a position you would be placed should anything happen to

me while under the ban of the court as to my sanity. I have consulted the most eminent authority on the law in such cases (not Fortew), and am advised that I alone can initiate proceedings to properly undo what has been done. I stand ready to do this, ready to confirm my will as made in every particular; ready to forget all that is past, ready to give, without a question, a full release and discharge to my Committee and to her father and bear the loss of the money sunk and expended (about which I know all), without a word of complaint. I will go home to live, provide you, so long as I live, with everything heart can desire, in short make a fresh start upon our married life in every particular upon one condition, that you and I shall henceforth have our home to ourselves, that is so far as the members of your family are concerned, and that I should be the head of my own household. I will take your promise that this condition will be fulfilled and allow a reasonable time to carry it out. Your ever loving husband—Nicholas. P. S.—We await your answer in a carriage at the gate. If favorable I will see you at once." (*Sternly to Dr. H.*) Dr. Haarbauer, what did you mean by telling a deliberate untruth; that Mr. Flush was dead?

Dr. H. My tear matam, I beg your pardon; I tell you noting of die sort; I told you dot Mr. Flush *have—left—us—* and so he hed dis morning in a earriage mit his sister.

EDITH. Well, Pa?

Mr. S. Oh, we'll go—only be too glad to get out of such an infernal scrape so easily. I'd send word out at once to have them come in.

EDITH. But Ma——

Mr. S. Well, Ma will have to go. We'll go to her at once while she's feeling the subduing influence of the crystal shower. I guess you better order up a pail or two more, so we can have them handy. (*Exeunt EDITH and Mr. S. c.*)

Dr. H. I enfy dot old Flush—Dot gurl hef a hett twenty year olter denn her body. (*Enter FORTEW, l.*)

FORT. Mr. Short said you were alone and had something to tell me.

Dr. H. Yes, dake a share. Hev you got all die parties vat you represent down in your book?

FORT. I think so, and I call it a pretty good day's work, too. Eleven distinct retainers.

MR. H. My gracious, you are a smart fellow, und all grow out of vun dead old man, eh?

FORT. Yes—that's one great beauty of our profession—it's like a scrap of mushroom spawn—you may gather a basket full from it.

DR. H. (*meditatively*) Vun dead old man, eh? My gracious!

FORT. Yes. Isn't it beautiful to see a structure rise up thus from a single foundation stone?

DR. H. Und ef die old man hedn't died, all dis pisniss would not be—eh?

FORT. Of course not.

DR. H. How much you make von all dis?

FORT. Oh! thousands of dollars.

DR. H. Is dot so? You are a smart man, my gracious! You remember vunce—now more dann vun year ago—here in dis room you tell me dot in your opinion eligdricity in medicine vas a hombogs, und I got mad—you remember dot?

FORT. I remember *thinking* so, and I haven't altered my opinion.

DR. H. Dot's all right—I know a lawyer vill shtick to his opinion until it pays to shange it. Only now, I dell you vot, dis—"hombogs"—hev done. It hev sheated a lawyer out of eleven dishtinct retainers, it hev shpoiled his goot day's vork—it hev put out die fire vot die little shpark kindle—it hev rob bed dis goot man—dis smart mon of tousends of thallers, for it hev kept alive die man out of whose death all dese mushrooms grow, it hev kep him hale and hearty, and lively, my gracious—ha! ha! ha!

FORT. Now, what in the world do you mean?

DR. H. Die peautiful shtructure vot rise from vun foundation shtone collopse.

FORT. You don't mean to say——

DR. H. Dot's joost vot I means to say,—Mr. Flush is—not—tedd. He has never been tedd. By dis time—he is—in dis very house——

FORT. (*astonished*) How did you find that all out?

DR. H. I hef known it all die time. Oh! my gracious,

neffer did I tink I lif to see die day venn could be fooled die judicial mind. But I hev seen him und now, vot hef I more to lif for—notings ! oh—ha! ha! ha! my gracious.

FORT. (*angrily*) Oh! keep still your laughing. This is an outrage. An actionable imposition. It's a—a—but I don't understand. Tell me all about it.

Dr. H. (*imitating FORT's manner*) My aged frient being die counsel for the opposing interest it vood not be right for me, nor could my learned frient exshpect me, to give him any informations for nottings. He petter go hire some counsel und denn ve get togedder und make some compromises may be—ha! ha! ha! my gracious!

FORT. Pshaw. Haarbauer, you're too hard. You never have forgiven me for settling that case of yours. I hear some one coming. Let's go into the other room and then tell me all about it. There are sherry and crackers there.

Dr. H. Vot sherry? Die dark color; 'vot ve used to hef?

FORT. Yes, the same.

Dr. H. Vell, den, I forgive you dis time. (*Exeunt R.*)

*Enter C., Mrs. S., Mr. S., Mr. FLUSH, JANE and EDITH.*

Mrs. S. (*speaking as they come in*), I cannot, I cannot; I am willing to make every sacrifice for my child that I can; willing to go away from here, as I say, to give up all the little conveniences and luxuries of this my home; to forego my cherished plans and schemes for your happiness. But, when you ask me to promise that I will let your affairs entirely alone, not to attempt *any* interference, you ask an impossibility. "What does the little flower of Spring, when soil and water fail? It dies poor, little thing!" And so would I; and so would any mother. I don't ask much. Let me come here and interest myself five days a week and I will be content.

Mr. FL. (*looking at JANE, who shakes her head*) No, Mrs. Short, that cannot be after all that has transpired.

Mrs. S. (*plaintively*) Four days!

Mr. FL. Come, come Matilda; be reasonable for once.

Mrs. S. (*glaring at S.*) Thank you, Aristotle, for your kindness to her who weaned you—I mean your children—(*to FL.*) Three days.

Mr. FL. (*looking J., who shakes her head*) No, no, no, Mrs.

Short. It has taken me ten months to make up my mind, and I will be firm.

Mrs. S. (*plaintively*) Two days. Two are not many. Two into seven—three and one over. Spare me two days.

Mr. FL. (*looking at J.; same business*) No, Mrs. Short; we really can't allow it.

Mrs. S. (*after a struggle with herself*) Alas, then, *one day?*

Mr. FL. and J. *whisper together.*

Mr. FL. Well, Mrs. Short,—

Mrs. S. Call me mamma, Nicholas.

Mr. FL. We will agree to that. Jane and I have promised to spend every Friday at the asylum with some very pleasant people, some very sane lunatics we have met there. We shall leave here about ten in the morning and return about three in the afternoon. And on those days and between those hours you may understand that you are free to come here and “interest” yourself, as you call it, in our affairs. You will not interfere with the servants.

J. Nor disturb the furniture.

Mr. FL. Nor exhibit any violent paroxysms of temper.

J. Nor touch anything that we may keep under lock and key.

Mr. FL. We shall only expect to see you at other times on *special* invitation. This has your approval, Edith?

EDITH. Yes, Nicholas.

Mr. FL. (*to Mrs. S.*) Is it a bargain?

Mrs. S. (*regretfully*) Well, sir, it is a hard bargain. But having another daughter who may marry soon, and thus open up a new field for the exercise of my lego—maternal longings—I consent and promise.

Mr FL. (*with sigh of relief*) We are perfectly satisfied.

*Enter* ELSIE, *hurriedly, c., carrying* BIJOU, *and followed by*  
GREENE.

ELSIE. Oh! Ma. Oh! Pa. Oh! Edie. I've got a new dog. (*Enter* Dr. H. and FORT. R.) My broken heart is mended and my sorrows are over.

GREENE. And she loves him already.

ELSIE. A hundred thousand million billion trillion times more than I ever loved Mignonette.

Dr. H. My gracious ! How long hev you hed him to get so much lof ?

ELSIE. *Him* is a *her*, and I've had *her* five minutes.

Dr. H. Vot a constitution hev die heart, of a girl, my gracious !

FORT. Well, excuse me ; I have some business still,

I'm on both sides in the old Watkins' Will.

By will he'd left a headstone for his grave ;

They fight the Will the price of it to save.

The last time that I saw the son—alone—

He said t'was rather costly for a *stone*. (Exit c.)

Dr. H. Well, I believe him ; I moost say goot day—

Undto my laboratory hased away *(to audience)*.

My frients, soon vill I hev shtuck all around some bills.

Vot advertize mit pictures, my new pills,

Exshplode vun in your shtomach effery night.

Dey'll knock your headache higher dann die kite. (Exit c.)

GREENE *(to ELSIE)* : Ma told me to go early.

ELSIE. Don't go yet—

I wan't your handkerchief, for Bijou's nose is wet.

*(Gr gives it to her and she uses it on BIJOU'S nose.)*

Say zank ou, Bijou, to zoo own papa.

He's got to go, for he must mind his Ma.

*(Holds up BIJOU, and GREENE takes paw, &c.)*

Mr. S. *(to audience)* Well, we must leave you ; we have got to pack,

And you'll be gone before we can get back.

Come on, Matilda.

Mrs. S. *(stepping forward)* Stop, I wish to speak.

They've cut my meddling down to once a week.

I think, however, I'll presume to say,

They'll find that one a *pretty lively day*—

J. *(aside)* To pack ? I hope it is not acting mean,

But I'll go watch the *spoons* and souptureen.

*(Keeps eye on Mr. and Mrs. S., who are in conversation).*

Mr. FL. (*standing by* EDITH) I feel as strong as ever—all my  
aches have fled

Thanks to magnetic bolster and galvanic bed.

Edith, you love me ; let me take your hand.

EDITH (*hesitating, putting hands behind her*) Well, Nicholas ;  
your Will shall *surely* stand ?

And every penny shall be left to me ?

Mr. FL. Yes, darling ; not one word shall altered be.

EDITH. (*giving hand* Then, there's my hand, and I *will* try  
To like you, just a little, till you die ;

But, please, dear Nicholas, do not get so strong ;

You'll keep on living no one knows how long.

Mr. FL. (*gayly*) Well, there's no knowing, we boys used to say,  
Where 'ere there is a will there is a way.

EDITH. Oh ! that old proverb's much improved in part.  
Now, where there is a *Will*, there is a *Heart*.

Mr. FL. and EDITH.

J.

Mr. S.

ELSIE.

Mrs. S.

GR.

Curtain.













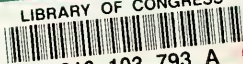




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